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# Sacred Heart of Jesus

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## Is An Act of Consecration Only a Passing Act?

**H**UMAN words are but the fleeting expression of the thoughts of our mind, the aspirations of our soul, the emotions of our breast. Though our thoughts may be abiding, and though our aspirations and our sentiments may be constant, their external manifestations or expression is naturally transient.

Still, it would be quite false to judge of the power of words by the shortness of their duration, for, after their sound has died away, their effect may long remain, yea, may be eternal. The words which the priest whispers over the bread and wine in the Eucharistic Sacrifice are momentary, and yet, when the accents of the sacramental form are no longer heard, Christ silently



abides beneath the sacred species in obedience to those fleeting words. Likewise, the words of the marriage contract soon pass, but their effect continues to bind husband and wife in a union that can be dissolved only by death. Again, the words of Baptism which the minister of Christ pronounced over us lasted but a few moments, and yet, long after the voice of that priest is hushed, even when his lips are closed in the silence of death, the character of Baptism continues to shine as brightly and freshly in our Christian souls as when our foreheads were still moistened by the regenerating waters. Even the words of Jesus have long since ceased to fall upon mortal ears, but their meaning and their effect is so far-reaching that the Divine Master could emphatically declare that, although heaven and earth would pass, His words would never pass away.

Words, then, naturally pass, but their effect remains. Now, apply

this truth to the acts of consecration which Catholics often make in virtue of some special devotion which they cherish. It would be absurd to underrate the value of such acts by the fallacious statement that they are almost meaningless or useless because they are so transitory. An act of consecration is a solemn act whereby we make a perpetual offering of ourselves—an act the effect of which marks the whole of our lives, and establishes abiding relations between ourselves and the person to whom we are consecrated. At times, indeed, thoughtless devotees may hastily make some act of consecration, and then live in forgetfulness thereof, but such examples no more militate against the value or efficacy of acts of consecration than the examples of thoughtless people, who forget or refuse to pay their lawful debts, tell against the validity or binding force of the verbal contract whereby they assumed such obligations of justice.

In the present pamphlet I shall briefly explain what is meant by consecrating families to the Sacred Heart, and show the advantages of this devotion, in the earnest hope that many readers will be moved to pay this tribute of gratitude, of love, and of reparation to the adorable Heart of the Word Incarnate.



## II

### **What Is the Meaning of Consecrating a Family to the Sacred Heart?**

Although the whole human race, as well as each particular family, and each individual member, belongs by right of creation and redemption, to Jesus Christ, we may nevertheless voluntarily consecrate ourselves to His Sacred Heart. Pope Leo XIII, in his zeal for the glory of the Heart of Jesus and for the welfare of souls, consecrated mankind to that Divine Heart; many bishops have likewise consecrated their dioceses; and now the act of consecrating families to the Sacred Heart is proposed to Christian souls as a most salutary practice.

The consecration of a family to the Sacred Heart is the act whereby the father and mother offer themselves and their children to the

Heart of Jesus in order to express their resolution of remaining closely united to that Heart of love, of belonging to It perpetually and entirely, and of devoting themselves generously to Its service.

Such an act is full of meaning, for thereby the parents not only acknowledge that Jesus Christ has the right, by creation and redemption, and in virtue of the Sacrament of Matrimony, which they have received, to reign over their family, but they also declare and protest that, even if Christ had not already this inalienable right in virtue of those sacred titles, they would freely hand themselves and their children over to His Divine Heart, to be devoted for evermore to Its love and service. Henceforth the family is united to the Heart of Jesus by a new title—the act of perpetual self-oblation which the parents have made of themselves and their children.

In the fourth part of this pam-

phlet I shall explain how the Act of Consecration is to be made by the family, and shall mention the daily practices which the family is to perform in order to remain faithful to the spirit of that beautiful consecration.

### III

#### **What Are the Advantages of Such An Act of Consecration?**

This solemn consecration will bring down on the entire family and on each member the choicest blessings. The words of the offering will be wafted heavenwards by the Guardian Angels of the family, and will make sweet music around the throne of Jesus, who will dilate His Heart, and shed upon the family in richest profusion the graces of which It is the perennial spring. Rather, I should say, that act of consecration will speed heavenwards like an arrow of prayerful love to pierce the Heart of Jesus, the fountainhead of grace, whence the purest streams of redeeming grace will gush forth to renew and sanctify the Christian family. Special relations, and abiding ones, too, will thence exist be-

tween the consecrated family and the Sacred Heart, which will guard the whole family and guide each member thereof onwards and upwards over the winding, narrow, rugged paths of life unto the vision of the glorified Heart of Jesus in the light of Heaven, and the perpetual ecstatic enjoyment of the measureless love which It sheds upon the elect.

As a result of such a consecration, the Sacred Heart will cherish that family as the object of a special predilection. Ah! it would need an angel to explain what it is to become the object of such a predilection, and even a celestial spirit could only inadequately express or describe to us such a reality, for in this life our clouded mind, even when deified by the light of faith, beholds but dimly the bright truths of God's love, and only imperfectly grasps the clearest expressions of that glorious reality.

In virtue, too, of the daily act of devotion which the family will per-

form before the image of the Sacred Heart, wondrous blessings will be constantly lavished on such a home in fulfillment of the promises which our Saviour made to St. Margaret Mary. Could we discern such blessings with the vision of the Guardian Angels of the family, how our hearts would expand with gratitude and beat with intensest delight! Tracing the life of such a family onwards from the moment of its solemn self-oblation made to the Heart of the Crucified, we should see the father protected day after day in his unselfish toil for his wife and children; we should behold the self-sacrificing mother comforted in the trials of which only a mother's loving heart is aware; we should see the little ones snatched from the very jaws of ruthless temptations which would have destroyed their angelic innocence; we should see the most marvelous graces incessantly shining on the paths of the members of that family as celestial lights to guide

them onwards, falling gently on their parched and weary souls as heavenly dews to refresh and invigorate them, streaming into their hearts as a supernal nectar to captivate them with the strength and sweetness of Divine love.

And then, when the Angel of Death had snatched a member from that Christian household, night after night, as the family gathered around the image of the Sacred Heart, before which that now absent member once so fervently worshiped with his loved ones, we would behold the glory of God gradually but surely dawning over him in the dark, penal fires of Purgatory, as the pleadings of the consecrated family arose like a sweet-smelling sacrifice to the Throne of the Heart of the Word made flesh.

A certain priest narrated to me a touching incident which he witnessed in his ministrations to the sick. Arriving at the bedside of a dying widowed mother, he beheld

five little children, the youngest of whom was but four years of age, each clasping a rosary-beads, and kneeling in pleading prayer around their departing mother. "And surely," added the priest, "if ever a prayer pierced the clouds, the prayers of those little children did."

We may say that the prayers of a family consecrated to the Heart of Jesus, which the members lovingly pour forth before the image of that Heart, on behalf of a member silently sojourning in the depths of Purgatory, will not only pierce the clouds of Heaven, but the very Heart of God Incarnate, and cause the balm of Divine mercy to descend upon the imprisoned soul and soothe it in its suffering, and shorten its period of expiation.

Oh, no wonder the infallible Vicar of Christ has approved of and blessed the project of consecrating families to the Sacred Heart. Listen to the sweet words of encourage-



ment which His Holiness, Benedict XV, addressed to Father Boevey, the zealous propagator of this devotion: "In your zeal for the welfare of human society, you act rightly in stirring up, in the first place, and propagating the Christian spirit in family homes, by establishing in the bosom of our families the charity of Jesus Christ that it may reign therein as a queen. In acting thus, you obey Jesus Christ Himself, Who has promised to shed abroad His blessings on the homes in which an image of His Heart shall be exposed and honored.

## IV

### **How to Make This Consecration**

Since the consecration of the family to the Sacred Heart is a landmark in the Christian life of the family on its journey towards eternity, this act should be surrounded by all the solemnity and splendor which the circumstances of the family can command. A beautiful framed picture, or a lovely statue, of the Sacred Heart should be procured, and placed in a conspicuous and fitting place, and, if possible, a suitable altar should be erected before it. Some special feast-day should be chosen as the day of consecration, and the children should spend the day in adorning the image and decorating the altar, selecting the choicest flowers, and also procuring neat and even exquisite drappings. These conditions are not, of

course, strictly required, and, though they cannot all be fulfilled, the piety of the family will supply for what is wanting in external splendor.

In the evening, at a convenient hour, the father, mother, and children will assemble before the altar of the Sacred Heart, on which a small lamp, or a number of candles, should be lighted as symbols of the living faith and ardent charity of the family; then the father will slowly and distinctly read the consecration, while the members of the family repeat it after him, sentence by sentence. It would be well if each member of the family had a written or printed copy of the form of consecration; the whole family could then recite it simultaneously. If our Lord has declared that, where two or three are gathered together in His name, He is there in their midst, how lovingly He will hasten to bless with His presence the family gathered together to honor His Sacred Heart in so special a manner!

Any form of consecration may be used. The following is the official form:

Sacred Heart of Jesus, Who didst manifest to St. Margaret Mary the desire of reigning in Christian families, we today wish to proclaim Thy most complete regal dominion over our own. We would live in future with Thy life; we would cause to flourish in our midst those virtues to which Thou hast promised peace here below; we would banish from us the spirit of the world which Thou hast cursed. And Thou shalt reign, over our minds in the simplicity of our faith, and over our hearts by the whole-hearted love with which they shall burn for Thee, the flame of which we shall keep alive by the frequent reception of Thy Divine Eucharist.

Deign, O Divine Heart, to preside over our assemblings, to bless our enterprises, both spiritual and temporal, to dispel our cares, to sanctify our joys, to alleviate our sufferings. If ever one or other of us should have the misfortune to afflict Thee, remind

him, O Heart of Jesus, that Thou art good and merciful to the penitent sinner. And when the hour of separation strikes, when death shall come to cast mourning into our midst, we will all, both those who go and those who stay, be submissive to Thy eternal decrees. We will console ourselves with the thought that a day will come when the entire family, reunited in heaven, can sing forever Thy glories and Thy mercies.

May the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the glorious patriarch, St. Joseph, present this consecration to Thee, and keep it in our minds all the days of our life.

All glory to the Heart of Jesus, our King and our Father. Amen.

The act of consecration ended, the family will arise, and each member in turn, commencing with the father, will sign the written formula which the latter used while reciting the consecration. This document will thenceforth be carefully kept amongst the family treasures as an abiding proof of the devotedness of the family to the Heart of Jesus.

## V

### **How to Remain Faithful to the Spirit of This Consecration**

It is not enough merely to make such an act of consecration; the family must ever strive henceforth to remain faithful to the spirit of that beautiful oblation made to the Heart of Jesus. As the child whose soul has been stamped with the character of Baptism is obliged to remain ever faithful to that glorious sacrament by leading a truly Christian life; as the husband and wife are bound constantly to live according to the solemn promise they made before the altar of God; so the Catholic family is in honor bound to live according to the spirit of their offering to the Sacred Heart.

In perpetual remembrance of their consecration, the father and mother, with all the children, will kneel every

night, at a convenient hour, before the altar of the Sacred Heart which they have erected, or before the picture which they have suspended on the wall. Then one member of the family, preferably the father, will recite some act of homage in honor of the Heart of Jesus—the Litany of the Sacred Heart, or the Act of Reparation, or any other prayer or hymn in honor of that Divine Heart. This is indeed, a simple and easy practice; but we must remember that we please our Lord more by fidelity in the daily practice of a short act of homage than by an occasional outpouring of endless prayers. We may apply to devotion to the Sacred Heart what St. John Berchmans said on his deathbed, when asked by his companions what practice was most pleasing to the Mother of God—“*Quidquid minimum, dum modo sit constans*” (“Any little act, if only it be constant”). Yes, constancy is a characteristic trait of true devotion.

Each daily act of homage rendered to the Sacred Heart by the consecrated family will form a golden step in the ladder that will rise heavenwards from the Christian home; every such act will form a heavenly link in the chain that will stretch across the yawning chasm of eternity to the land of everlasting love. As the family assembles night after night to honor the loving Heart of the Word made flesh, the Guardian Angels of that Christian home will hover over its members, and record in the Book of Life each successive act of honor, of love, and of reparation as it speeds heavenwards to reach the throne of the glorified Heart of Jesus.

After this simple act of homage has been paid to the Divine Heart by the family as a reminder of their previous consecration, and in obedience to the spirit thereof, it would be well for the family to recite together the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin, or, at least, a few decades.



This, of course, is not, strictly speaking an essential addition to the practice of homage to be rendered to the Sacred Heart, but the family Rosary is so beautiful and salutary a devotion, the Virgin Mother is so linked with her Divine Son, and devotion to Her is so bound up with devotion to His Adorable Heart, that no more opportune practice could be performed after the family have daily manifested their allegiance to that Heart of love.

— Where there are children, the father or mother, or one of the elder members of the family, should then instruct the little ones for ten or fifteen minutes in the Catechism. The unfailing and necessity means to keep the faith alive in our midst is the Christian instruction of children. The fact that so many young men and young women become negligent of their religious duties as they grow up is frequently, though not invariably, attributable to want of genuine, constant religious instruc-

tion in their childhood days. If children are to grow up in the practice of true devotion to the Sacred Heart, which necessarily includes the fulfillment of every religious duty, undoubtedly they must be patiently taught the truth, and shown the beauty, of the divinely established religion which is their supernatural birthright in virtue of the Sacrament of Baptism which they have received. Hence the daily catechetical instruction of the young is earnestly recommended in connection with the daily family worship of the Sacred Heart. Our Lord will also bless in the most abundant manner the families who are faithful to this custom. If He has promised a special reward to those who give a cup of water to a child in His name, surely He will shower His choicest gifts on those who give the thirsting souls of their little ones to drink copiously of those life-giving waters of heavenly doctrine which flow forth from His Divine

Heart. On the contrary, those parents who neglect the religious instruction of the tender souls entrusted to them by Providence will have to give a rigorous account of their stewardship when they are summoned to the tribunal of Eternal Justice.

The practice, then, of consecrating families to the Sacred Heart will bring forth the richest fruits of sanctification. This salutary practice, which has been blessed by our Holy Father, will unite the Catholic family most intimately to the Heart of Jesus, will insure the constant blessing and protection of that Divine Heart, and will establish abiding relations between the Christian home and the Fountainhead of Grace, whence copious streams will perpetually flow over the souls of the family to purify and sanctify them in their earthly pilgrimage, and to assuage their suffering in the realm of purgatorial fire; while fidelity to the simple daily practices

recommended will mean the unceasing worship of the Heart of Jesus, unfailing devotion to our Blessed Mother, and the incessant growth of the souls of children in the supernatural life by means of Christian doctrine.

May the seeds of this beautiful practice become deeply imbedded in the Catholic soil of America; may they rapidly germinate, and grow and flourish with perennial vigor and beauty; may they bring forth the fairest flowers of virtue and the sweetest fruits of holiness. May this practice daily gain ground until every Catholic family of this great Republic is consecrated to the Sacred Heart. Then from shore to shore will resound a perpetual chorus of praise, of gratitude, of love, of reparation, and of supplication to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

## SELECTED PRAYERS IN HONOR OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

### Act of Consecration

I give and consecrate to the Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, my whole life, all my actions, my trials, my sufferings, devoting every portion of my being to loving, honoring and glorifying Him, to working for His love alone, renouncing with all my heart whatever may be displeasing to Him. I take Thee, then, O Sacred Heart, for the one object of my love, the Protector of my life, the Pledge of my salvation, the Remedy of my inconstancy, the Redeemer of all my faults, and my sure refuge in the hour of death. O Heart of all goodness, be my justification before God the Father, and shield me from the effects of His just anger. O Heart, overflowing with love, I place all my confidence in Thee, for I

dread my own weakness, while I hope everything from Thy bounty. Do Thou destroy in me whatever may displease Thee or withstand Thy will, and may the pure love of Thee be so deeply imprinted in my heart that I may never forget Thee nor be separated from Thee, and I implore Thee by all Thy love that my name may be graven upon Thee. May it be all my happiness to live and die as Thy slave. Amen.

*(St. Margaret Mary, d. 1690.)*

### **In His Footsteps**

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, filled with infinite love, broken by my ingratitude, pierced by my sin, yet loving me still, accept the consecration that I make to Thee of all that I have and all that I am. Take every faculty of my soul and body and draw me day by day nearer and nearer to Thy Sacred Side and there, as I may bear the lesson, teach me Thy blessed ways. Amen.

## Prayers for the Gifts of Piety and Fortitude

Jesus, my Kinsman, my Brother, my Friend, my Saviour, my Redeemer, my Teacher, my Master, my Lord and my God; give me a loving heart filial towards God and Thy blessed Mother; fraternal towards Thee and all mankind, especially to the household of the faith: docile to Thy Church and to Thy Word: kindly to all the works of the Sanctifier.

O God the Holy Ghost, give me light to contemplate the love and the Passion of Jesus, that I may be changed into love and patience. Take from me selfishness, softness, self-love, delicacy, cowardice, and fear; give me a spirit of endurance, a love of labor and of the Cross, of hardness and of courage, that I may be willing to spend, and to be spent, for the elect's sake.

*(Cardinal Manning, d. 1892.)*

## **For Sympathy With Christ**

Lord Jesus Christ, crucified for sinners, receive this sinner who seeks shelter with Thee, and protect me under the shadow of Thy wings that Thou dost spread wide upon the Cross, in the arms of Thy love. May there go forth from Thy sacred wounds and fall on me some rays of humility, of obedience, of patience and of charity. From the wound of Thy Heart . . . wound my heart . . . that, illumined with the light of Thy death, I may really understand the pain and the suffering that Thou hast endured in Thy Hands and Thy Feet, in Thy Head, in Thy Body, in Thy Heart and in Thy Soul.

*(Van Esch, d. 1578.)*

## **In His Passion**

Give me, O Christ Jesus, the light of Thy Holy Spirit to understand the value of the Cross.

O Sacred Heart, that lifted Thyself up in acts of pure prayer under the stress of Thy agony, touch my



cold heart with a spark of Thy fire, that I may learn to pray in the hour of sorrow and pain! O virtue of the Sacred Heart, come out and transform this heart of mine! Give me strength to grow by slow degrees more and more like Thee. O my Redeemer, let the hour come when there shall be nothing left in my heart or my life that I have not surrendered to Thee!

*(Bishop Hedley, O.S.B., d. 1915.)*

### **For a Happy Death**

Remember, O Lord, the word which Thou spakest on the Cross: Father, into Thy Hands I commend My spirit. I pray Thee receive my soul, when it must leave my sinful body, into the loving wound of Thy Heart.

O dear Lord Jesus Christ, remember how on the Cross Thy blessed Heart broke in the bitterness of death. When in my last hour my heart shall break in death, give me, I beseech Thee, this grace, that

Thou mayest find in my soul perfect love, true contrition, firm faith, and unshakable trust in Thy mercy. Amen.

*(Marienvrede, Convent of the Cross.)*

### **Evening Prayer**

O good and merciful God, I thank Thee for keeping me this day in life and health, as also for all the good things Thou hast given me, for body and soul, for time and eternity. I offer and commend to Thy holy Heart any good thing that I have by Thy kindness today, thought, spoken and done, and all that I have had to bear of cross and suffering.

I pray Thee to unite them to the love of Thy holy Heart, to Thy bitter Passion, and Thy merits, that they may please Thee and profit me to eternal life. Amen.

*(From an unknown medieval author.)*



