



Homily for the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

11 June

by Mgr Daniel McHugh

The Way of the Heart

Years ago, when we visited Ireland as a family and went to relations, one thing you would find in the kitchen of most homes was a picture of the Sacred Heart with a light before it, and frequently a picture of the Pope on one side and President Kennedy on the other. How times have changed! If you go to a Bed and Breakfast these days, you would find it hard to see any religious symbol, though here and there you see Padre Pio, now St Pio. However, I am assured by those who watch Mrs Brown's Boys, that the Sacred Heart is prominent in the kitchen there.

I have been very blessed to have had a number of special ministries in the Diocese, and it would be very hard to single out one that predominates; I learned so much in each role I was given by the Bishop.

But, in terms of the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, it was, of course, being the founding Director of the Maryvale Institute, and having the Shrine, the first public Chapel of the Sacred Heart in England under my roof, that stands out.

You can read a brief history on the Diocesan Website and Maryvale Institute Website. But, it was in living there and seeing people come to pray at the Shrine that I learned so much. People came from near and far: I remember a teacher coming there at crucial moments in his life and finding light and strength and faith. Later, he went on to become a Permanent Deacon. I remember local people coming to pray for their families, especially at times of crisis. It is a Devotion to the person Jesus: the man of love, of forgiveness, of mercy. Whether you are a working man or woman, an intellectual or a traveller, you are at home before the Heart of Jesus.

It's interesting to see the Holy Father's Intention for this month of June. It is badged "The Way of the Heart" and he says "we pray that all those who suffer may find their way in life, allowing themselves to be touched by the Heart of Jesus."

Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese



In recent weeks, Pope Francis has linked this theme to those who are suffering as a result of the Pandemic, and those who suffer racial abuse. The Holy Father's

message is that "wherever there is sorrow, wherever there is suffering, wherever there is difficulty, the Heart of Jesus is always there first. **No one is alone.**" His Intentions are promoted by the Pope's "Worldwide Prayer Network (which includes the Eucharistic Youth Movement)". His message is that there is a path for everyone who needs it; a path that connects us to the Heart of Jesus, which can lead people to incarnate in their own lives a mission of compassion for the world.

As a Jesuit, Pope Francis would have been nurtured in this Devotion: the Worldwide Prayer Network is a Project, if you like, of the Jesuits reaching back to the time of St Margaret Mary Alcoque in the 17th Century, who was canonized 100 years ago and whose spiritual Director was St. Claude de la Colombiere, a Jesuit. In the final Apparition to her, Jesus asked that the Visitation Sisters (her Community) and the Priests of the Company of Jesus (Jesuits) take on the task of communicating to the World the experience and understanding of the Sacred Heart.

But it wasn't just through the Jesuits he learned this Devotion. On Sunday last, he spoke at the Angelus of the Prayer his Grandmother taught him: "Jesus, make my heart more like yours." The people in St Peter's Square repeated after him: "Jesus, make my heart more like yours." And, that can be our prayer as we make our way through this Novena.

By the way, there are homes where you will find a picture of the Sacred Heart today and a note of the Home being blessed and consecrated by the Parish Priest. We had one in my family mounted in a special place where we went to pray at important moments. And, the Bridgettine Sisters can provide a picture of the original stained glass image at the Religious Books and Articles Shop in Maryvale.

"Jesus make my heart more like yours."

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THE ARCHDIOCESE *of* BIRMINGHAM
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