



Dilexit Nos: He has loved us

Reflection for Corpus Christi and the Sacred Heart 22 and 27 June

by Mgr Daniel McHugh

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven, says the Lord. If anyone eats this bread he will live forever".

I am hoping to return to Paris before long to see the wonderful restoration of Notre Dame after the devastating fire damaged that wonderful iconic building dedicated to Our Lady. Another Church I will certainly visit again when I am there is the Sacre Coeur on Montmartre, the beautiful Basilica dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This year on Sunday last, 15 June, there was a celebration of 150 years of the laying of the foundation stone: it was a festive day of prayer, retreat and consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The first stone of the building was laid on June 16, 1875. The Archbishop of Paris at the time chose to build on Montmartre, the hill where the first Bishop of Paris, St Denis, had been martyred in the 3rd century. It was there that the Companions of St Ignatius Loyola took their first vows, which led to the founding of 'The Society of Jesus' (The Jesuits) in 1539. Now a must-see spot in Paris, it was built to commemorate 200 years of the apparitions of the Sacred Heart to St Margaret Mary Alacoque in Paray-le-Monial, France. There Christ showed his heart as a sign of his love and his desire to be loved in return. *"During its construction" the Rector of the Basilica told OSV News "some ladies said that if the stones were rising, the prayers should rise too." And, "little by little, the link was made between the Heart of Jesus and his presence in the Eucharist and adoration gradually took hold. From August 1, 1885, perpetual adoration began!"* Cardinal Christophe Pierre, the French apostolic nuncio to the United State, will mark the occasion with a Solemn Mass in the Basilica. The Rector Father Esklet after a major procession of the Blessed Sacrament through the neighborhood will emerge onto the Basilica's forecourt at midnight with the Blessed Sacrament. He explained: *"The Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Montmartre is truly the home of God's people, where Jesus awaits everyone with his heart burning with love. It is like a beacon, a sentinel watching over the capital, France, and the world. I will bless them with the Blessed Sacrament."*

In the context of a special 350 year Jubilee of the Apparitions of the Sacred Heart to St Margaret Mary as she prayed before the Blessed Sacrament in the Convent at Paray-le-Monial and in the Jubilee Year of Hope we have something special to celebrate this June 2025 because this June is exactly 350 years from when Christ requested the Feast of the Sacred Heart. It was between 13th and 20th June, during the Octave of Corpus Christi, 1675, that is the "Great Apparition" or the "Fourth Revelation of the Sacred Heart", Our Lord made known his desire for the Feast of the Sacred Heart to be established and he promised that His heart *"will open wide and pour forth lavishly the influence of its Divine love on all" who will receive Holy Communion on the Feast of the Sacred Heart in a spirit of reparation for the outrages our Eucharistic Lord has received.* In most parishes the

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Solemnity of the Sacred Heart is marked in a special way, particularly this Sacred Heart Jubilee Year when the date, which relates to the date of Easter and Corpus Christi, is held on Friday 27 June.

In Maryvale Chapel where the first public Shrine of the Sacred Heart is located the Solemnity is marked with a Novena of Masses leading up to the Day starting 9 days before – on Corpus Christi (now transferred to a Sunday in England and Wales). Corpus Christi, the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, is a day to renew our belief in the Real Presence of Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist. While we celebrate the Eucharist in relation to the Passion and Death of Jesus on the occasion of the Last Supper in Holy Week, here we celebrate His continuing presence with us in the Mystery of the Eucharist – Jesus is here with us for all time. It was on the occasion of a Priest having doubts about this at a place called Bolsena near Orvieto in Italy that the miracle of the precious blood seeping from the host took place in 1263. Pope Urban IV instituted the Feast of Corpus Christi at Orvieto in 1264. St Thomas Aquinas was commissioned to prepare the Mass for the Feast – The Sequence at the Mass on Corpus Christi this coming Sunday was written by him as was Pange Lingua another Eucharistic Hymn part of which we sing at the Procession on Maundy Thursday and at Benediction (O Salutaris).

St Pope John Paul II pointed to Corpus Christi as the day when we should renew our belief in Jesus' Real Presence in the Eucharist. He spoke about it during a Homily in the year 2000: *"We would like to stay with Christ and for this reason we say to him with Peter: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life (Jn 6: 68) With the same conviction as Peter, let us kneel today before the Sacrament of the altar and renew our profession of faith in the real presence of Christ.'"*

In Dilexit Nos – on the Human and Divine love of the Heart of Jesus Christ – the Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father Pope Francis RIP we find these words *"It was in the Eucharist that Newman encountered the living heart of Jesus, capable of setting us free, giving meaning to each moment of our lives, and bestowing true peace."* And the Pope goes on to quote Newman *"O most Sacred, most loving Heart of Jesus, thou art concealed in the Holy Eucharist, and thou beatest for us still."*

The National Eucharist Congress lasting 3 years in the United States draws to a close on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi 22 June in Los Angeles. An article by Fr Roger Landry on the Congress 'The Sacred Heart and the Eucharistic Revival' notes in relation to the revelation to St Margaret Mary: *"Jesus links the 'Heart that has so loved men' with our response to him in his 'Sacrament of Love' which is the way he refers to his presence in the Holy Eucharist.... Pope Benedict would adopt those word Sacramentum Caritatis – as a title for his 2007 apostolic exhortation on the Holy Eucharist. Jesus' words to the French nun has not lost its relevance. Indeed the enduring validity of his words is one of the reasons why a Eucharistic Revival is much needed"*.

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