

Jesus, God's Valentine Who Breaks Open the Heart of Trinitarian Love for Us!



(Photo of the Sacred Heart found in Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil's Bible)

Valentine's day has become big business in our world today. Just about everything dealing with the day comes in the shape of a "heart," that universal symbol for love, too often wrapped in what is sensual, indulgent or merely romantic in human love. As with so many holidays, the juice of the day's deeper meaning for the soul has been squeezed out, leaving us unsatisfied and still hungry for something more.

History records an ancient Roman fertility festival called Lupercalia held each year on February 15th. At this time, when the Roman empire was fading in glory and came under attack on all sides, Emperor Claudius II issued an edict forbidding young men to marry for he needed them in his army and felt married men attached to families made poor soldiers. The young men, fearing to protest the mighty emperor, secretly came to the priest Valentine to be married. When the emperor learned of this "**friend of lovers**" as the priest came to be called, he had Valentine imprisoned. It is said that the prison jailer had a blind daughter who was cured and converted by Valentine and was allowed to visit the imprisoned priest. When Valentine refused to renounce his Christian faith to the Roman gods, the emperor sentenced him to death. The night before his martyrdom on February 14 (around 270 AD), Valentine wrote the young girl a note and signed it "**From your Valentine.**" Many claim that **that loving note** from the priest to encourage the neophyte in her faith is the origin of **the valentine** card of today.

As Christianity spread, many pagan feasts were renamed to honor Christian saints. In 496 AD Pope Gelasius turned Lupercalia into **St. Valentine's day**, moving the feast to February 14th, the day St. Valentine was martyred. In the passions of the young lovers pursuing the sacrament of marriage we see the **natural human love of eros**, that tender love God designed to draw human spouses into a holy communion as one body, a union that would heighten their experience of the God-ache within, that hunger for what is divine and eternal written in the depths of each person at creation, a hunger only God can satisfy, for He made us for Himself. In St. Valentine's life we see

that **supernatural love that is a gift from God** and mirrors God's own nature and kind of love, **agape love**, something divine dwelling within the soul, beckoning us to imitate the unconditional and total self-giving nature of our Creator, modeling our lives on the love of **The Beloved Son** for **The Father**. Such is the love that is proper to the creature for the Creator and gives testimony to the innate desire of the created soul for the Eternal Breath that breathed it forth and longs to draw it back into Itself, the bosom of our holy Triune Love. This is both the challenge and the promise of a truly Christian love as shown forth in the fullness of God's Revelation of Himself in Christ Jesus our Lord. St. Valentine's Day on February 14th is not merely a celebration of human love but is also a celebration of divine Love written in our very flesh and in the flesh of the Heart of Jesus.

In truth, the deeper meaning of Valentine's day, the celebration of love, began long before St. Valentine or any Roman festival. It began in eternity before time and the world were created. It began in the immanent life of the Most Holy Trinity which, by essence and nature, is LOVE! **Love is God's very life**. God made us in His image of love, with an intellect to know Him and a will to love Him. We understand that the heart is the center of the body from which all life flows via the blood. We understand that knowledge without love can leave a person mean-spirited, but a person with love has a unique way of knowing, a wisdom that does not rest in the intellect or will alone but involves the whole person, body and soul and spirit. The Hebrew Scriptures understood this when they spoke of a man knowing his wife and the two becoming one flesh. We are called to know God in that deep personal knowledge, that total personal experience that makes us one with Him in a way that far transcends any human knowledge and makes us fruitful with His own profundity. We cannot love what we do not know and we cannot know a person with only an intellect; we must know a person with our hearts. The heart must empower the mind and the will into that total experience of surrender and gift of our entire being.

Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich gives us that beautiful symbol of God's magnificent self-giving, like a spiral of circles constantly unfolding one revelation of His unfathomable Love upon another throughout the ages as seen in the works of creation, redemption and the sanctification of all that God has made until the day of final transformation when all things return to that Trinitarian bosom from which they came. Our minds are so small that God must feed us His divine truth like one feeds an infant with a slow progression from breast to milk to baby food to solid food and finally, to an adult diet. Our **natural human reason** can bring us to the knowledge of the existence of God as the Absolute, the Prime Mover, the First Cause, the Alpha and the Omega of all that has come to be, for nothing exists apart from God and nothing can create itself from nothing. Only **the supernatural gift of Faith** can take us into the mystery of the personal nature of God as a Trinity of Persons, as a Lover! We see this progressive diet in the unfolding revelation of God in the Hebrew Scriptures, that First Covenant God

made with His people as He led them into the desert, away from paganism and polytheism (belief in many gods) to an encounter with Himself and toward monotheism (belief in the One True God). This former Covenant gives way and is fulfilled in the New Covenant in Jesus, The Christ, the Word made flesh Who brings us to maturity in the knowledge of God as Love, as Person, as a Trinity of Persons. The Hebrew Scriptures hinted at that Trinitarian revelation in the visit of the three angels to Abraham, but it was in the New Covenant at the Baptism of Jesus that the Trinity of Persons in God was clearly made manifest to us when the Spirit rested upon Jesus and the Father proclaimed from the heavens, **“This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him.”** God is complete in Himself; that is the *immanent trinity*, the inner circle of God’s own life that is a perfect exchange of love between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But **God’s love by its very essence cannot be contained** and is impelled to give Itself away, endlessly; this is **Divine Revelation**, the *economy of the trinity*, God’s love pouring Itself out beyond His inner life into all He has made.

In God’s most profound revelation of Himself in the Person of Jesus, the Word made flesh in the Sacred Humanity, we are wed to Him like the bridegroom weds his bride. Thus, the Spirit who is the perfect Love between the Father and the Son and who has been poured out upon and into us is the very Love, the very Life that runs through the veins of this Mystical Body, this Bride of Christ, and makes us “one flesh” with Him and with each other in the mystery of God’s life flowing in and through us.

Let us ponder this incomprehensible Love spoken in the words of the Beloved disciple John who laid his head on Jesus’ breast and there learned the secrets of God’s Love transmitted directly by the Spirit from one mind and heart to the other. Jesus invites each of us to come and lay our heads upon His breast so we, too, might learn the secrets of His Sacred Heart and become in Him, the Beloved of God.

“ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.” (1 John 4: 7-17.)

When the Son of God stooped so low as to confine Himself in the embryonic form of our nature in the womb of that marvelous creature the Father designed to be a fitting dwelling place for His Son on earth, the Immaculate Virgin Mary, His Mother, we first encountered God's Triune Love in the tiny heartbeat of the God-child. **That tiny Heart at once so infant and so infinite has become God's dearest Valentine sent to every person on earth.** In history and in Scripture we have seen that Sacred Human Heart effect one wondrous deed of love and miracle after another until It was finally broken completely open for us when It was nailed to a tree, destined to be an open wound unwilling to heal itself until every person who would choose to accept Its Life poured out on Calvary would run up to and climb into that Heart to be forever changed **ontologically** into a new creation, the image of the Son so pleasing to The Father and inseparable from Him. As the Father gazes upon us hidden in the Heart of Jesus, the Father sees only the Son and loves us as His own dearly Beloved ever so precious in His sight.

In 1954 Our Lord spoke these words interiorly to Sister Mildred Neuzil:

“I am a Beggar for love, but how few give to Me the means to satisfy My divine hunger. I hunger for the love of My own, and I receive only the crumbs no other would accept.” (Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, Diary, OUR LADY OF AMERICA®, Fostoria, OH, Pg. 6.)

God is perfection itself and nothing is lacking in Him so what does Jesus mean when He calls Himself a Beggar? Beggars in our own experience are homeless people living on the streets who have nothing and survive solely on the charity of others. God does not need us and Jesus is God, so how can He be a Beggar? Divine Revelation speaks of the Son of God laying aside His divinity to become man in order to embrace our utter poverty and to bind Himself in His Sacred Humanity to all the weaknesses that are ours, save sin, and in that Humanity, like us, He has a need to love and to be loved. Nothing is so painful as an unrequited love. Who can ever love as much as Jesus has loved us, laying down His life for us in a most cruel and tortured death as a common criminal—almighty God and Infinite Love as a common criminal—sentenced to the most shameful of deaths, crucifixion! Who can fathom the depths to which Jesus humbled Himself for us? Who can fathom the love that prompted such self-giving to the very last drop of His Blood? So great was His pain that some of the medical examiners of the Shroud of Turin believe Christ's Heart **literally burst with the soldier's lance.** Surely such love demands a return!

On February 3, 1957 Our Lady spoke these words to Sister:

“My Son asks of souls love, that true love willing to sacrifice itself for the One loved. Man fears to sacrifice himself because he is selfish. If souls would place themselves into my keeping, I would teach them the way of true love. If men truly loved my Son, they would not quarrel with

each other and they would have peace in their own hearts. ... My sweet child, if love does not have its roots implanted deeply within the soul, it will die out or be rooted up by the first storm that besets it. O child of my Pure Heart, tell my children to come to me and learn this true love of my Son, which is so necessary for their peace of soul. ... But to make your hearts grow more and more like to the Heart of the Son, you must go to the Mother, whose heart is most like His. From this Pure and Immaculate Heart you will learn all that will make you more pleasing to the Divine Heart of the Son of God. The Holy Trinity looks down with infinite delight upon such souls and makes them Its heaven upon earth. ... Has ever a mother shown more love and interest in her children's welfare than I have done? O my little one, daughter of my Pure Heart, you must pray with greater fervor and offer yourself with greater love to the Heart of my Son." (Diary, Pgs. 15-17.)

Our Lady spoke of the need for reform of life, sanctification from within through an understanding of that great gift from God of His Divine Indwelling Presence within our souls through sanctifying grace. She acknowledged that all the graces of the Sacred Heart of Jesus come through the channel of her Immaculate Heart and that she will work miracles of grace in those who ask for them and empty their souls of attachment to sin. She spoke of her Heart being pierced by a cruel sword and the grief she experiences over our ingratitude and **lack of response to the profound love of her Divine Son for us.**

"Souls who cling to sin cannot have their hands free to receive the treasures of grace that I hold out to them. Behold, my small one, so tenderly loved by your Mother, behold then my Heart pierced by a cruel sword! Oh, what grief my children have caused me! My humble one, my small flower, we must have more souls who love, love unselfishly and without reserve. Who does anything who does not love?" (Diary, Pg. 19.)

In his encyclical on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, *Haurietis Aquas, You Shall Draw Water*, Pope Pius XII wrote, "We do not hesitate to declare that devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the most effective school of the love of God; the love of God which must be the foundation on which to build the Kingdom of God in the hearts of individuals, families, and nations."(#123.) Pope Pius XI called this devotion "the synthesis of our whole religion and the norm of a more perfect life." Pope Paul VI in 1965 wrote, "It is *absolutely necessary* that the faithful venerate and honor the Sacred Heart in the expression of their private piety as well as in the services of public cult, because of His fullness we have all received." In 1984, on the feast of the Sacred Heart, Pope John Paul II said, "In the Sacred Heart every treasure of wisdom and knowledge is hidden. **In that Divine Heart beats God's infinite love for everyone, for each one of us individually.**" Pope Benedict XVI, in *Deus Caritas Est, God is Love*, gives a beautiful explanation of the necessary unity of *eros (ascending love)* and *agape (descending love)* and of the necessary union of both body and soul if *eros* is to be true to its ordered ascent to what is eternal and divine. He states:

...man cannot live by oblation, descending love alone. He cannot always give, he must also receive. Anyone who wishes to give love must also receive love as a gift. Certainly, as the Lord tells us, one can become a source from which rivers of living water flow (cf. *Jn 7:37-38*). Yet to become such a source, one must constantly drink anew from the original source, which is Jesus Christ, from whose pierced heart flows the love of God (cf. *Jn 19:34*). ... Love looks to the eternal. Love is indeed “ecstasy”, not in the sense of a moment of intoxication, but rather as a journey, an ongoing exodus out of the closed inward-looking self towards its liberation through self-giving, and thus towards authentic self-discovery and indeed the discovery of God: “Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it.” (*Lk 17:33*) (Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, #7, #6, December 25, 2005.)

Many saints have inspired us with their devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the exchange of love between their hearts. St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane Frances de Chantal taught their followers to lodge in the pierced side of the Savior and to pray with their heads on His Heart so He might communicate His tender Love to them. St. Catherine of Siena speaks of Jesus taking her heart and giving her His own. Jesus appeared to St. Gertrude and said: “**Look at My Heart. I wish it to be thy temple.**” When complaining to Him about her distractions, He said, “**Behold my Heart, the delight of the Holy Trinity. I give it to thee that it may supply for what is wanting to thee.**” St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, Apostle of the Sacred Heart, has given us that precious image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus crowned with thorns, surmounted with a cross and resting upon a throne of fire.

[Our Lord told St. Margaret Mary]... that His Heart signified His immense love for us who are the cause of His sufferings that He, in His humanity, willed freely to undergo for our redemption, and especially the outrages He is exposed to in the Blessed Sacrament. He lamented that man largely ignored His great thirst to be loved in the Blessed Sacrament. He told the saint that in Gethsemane, immediately after the Last Supper, as He sweated blood, His great suffering was caused by the ingratitude of men, particularly toward the Blessed Sacrament.

When Christians see a valentine, how can we not think of the Heart of Jesus that poured out its love for us and begs for our love in return, not in saccharin sentiment and mere tokens of love but in a serious commitment to climb up on His cross and into His Heart to learn the true meaning of love, God’s kind of love. Sacred Scripture means by “heart,” not a fleeting sentiment of joy and tears but the personality directing the whole being, body, soul and spirit toward its good—God! Our Lady of America® reminds us that Jesus came to set our world on fire with His Divine Love and she asks us to be her **Torchbearers** bearing that **flame of Divine Love** to all the world. As fire purifies, so must we be purified of our sins. As fire gives light, so must we be enlightened with divine truth. As fire unites, so must we be united to that Eternal Flame that can melt the world’s hatreds into love within its refining fires.

“I wish to gather about me, my tender child, soldier and valiant bearer of the torch, an army of brave lovers, who as my torchbearers will enkindle the fire of Divine Love in the souls of men. Only those who are strong in love can become my soldiers to bear aloft, not the sword of destruction, but the sword of fire, the flaming torch of Divine Charity.” (Diary, Pg. 19.)

When Sister Mildred herself was approached by Jesus and asked if she would be willing to suffer for souls and accept His cross and His crown of thorns, she wrote her spiritual director, Father Paul F. Leibold, **“How could I refuse Him anything?”** When Jesus comes to us and asks us to suffer with Him for the salvation of souls, what do we say? Do we allow Him to place us on the altar of sacrifice as He did Sister Mildred? Or do we turn away? O may we write upon our hearts this prayer which Sister Mildred was inspired to write and prayed so often on her knees. Let us beg the Indwelling Most Holy Trinity to consume our hearts into the everlasting flame of Their own Love!

Prayer to the Indwelling Most Holy Trinity

O my Love, my only Good, Most Holy Trinity, I adore You, hidden in the depths of my soul. To You, to Your honor and glory, I dedicate my life. May every thought, word and deed of mine be an act of adoration and praise directed towards Your divine Majesty enthroned in my heart.

O Father, Infinite Goodness, behold Your child clothed in the likeness of Your Son. Extend to me Your arms that I may belong to You forever.

O Son, Divine Lord, made man, crucify me with Yourself that I may become, in union with You, a sacrifice of praise for the glory of Your Father.

O Holy Spirit, Fire of Everlasting Love, consume me on the altar of Divine Charity, that at the end of life, nothing may remain but that which bears the likeness of Christ.

O Blessed Trinity, worthy of all adoration, I wish to remain in spirit on my knees, to acknowledge forever your reign in me and over me, to Your everlasting glory.

Through the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the pure heart of St. Joseph, I consecrate my life to Your adoration and glory.

At the moment of death, receive me, O my Triune Love, that I may continue my adoration of love through all eternity. Amen. (200days)

Nihil Obstat: Daniel Pilarczyk, S.T.D.
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