

20.6.68

13.6.69 (East S. Hart)

4.6.70

8.6.72 ✓

PREFACE

"God be in my head"

The month of June, in Catholic piety, is <sup>give to devotion</sup> (dedicated) to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. And as tomorrow, the Friday of the 2nd week after Pentecost, is the Feast of the Sacred Heart, I <sup>1<sup>st</sup> like</sup> <sup>a little</sup> want to talk about this devotion today. In modern times, the devotion to the Sacred Heart, in the form in which our parents & grandparents knew it at least, has been suffering a decline - perhaps understandably, for the form of it we've known dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> century - St Margaret Mary Alacoque; and things have changed a bit since then. But basically, this devotion is as old as the Church itself - it's a devotion to the Person of Jesus Christ and to the love, human and divine, which He's shown for us; and our effort to return His love, and through repentance & self-sacrifice become one with Him in His love for all mankind. The heart, <sup>at least</sup> in western culture, has been a constant symbol of love, sympathy, care, thoughtfulness & kindness - just think of English language expressions like kind-hearted, heartfelt, heartless: of songs & ballads: of tree-trunks & walls disfigured by lovers. What more natural, then, than that the symbol of human love should have been <sup>closed</sup> ~~strong~~ also, in the case of Our Lord, to symbolise, in an easily understandable way, the immense love He has shown us in coming into our world, living our human life & dying & rising for our redemption, & sending the Holy Spirit of love to be always with us. In the Eucharist, above all, He's given us the greatest sign & proof of His love, to be our daily food and draw us ever closer into the mystery of God's love for mankind, and <sup>into</sup> the divine life of God. Since the <sup>sacrament of the</sup> Eucharist began to take again its central place in the ordinary practice of Catholics early in this century, under the impulse of Pope St Pius X, the

St Math. Passion (Bach)

Sacred Heart devotion, as originated and practiced in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, has found its deepest meaning & fulfillment. When it started, with St Margaret Mary, it was a providential recall to the reality of Christ's human and divine love for us, at a time when God's love had been largely forgotten about in the severe atmosphere of Jansenism and the stress, at that time, on Jesus as a moral teacher. In our prayer now, let us speak with confidence to Him who we know loves and cares for us and our world. PRAYERS.

For a prayer in music, let's listen to a piece of Bach, a man whose sacred music expresses a deep devotion to Christ - this is the farewell meditation on the burial of Christ, from his St Matthew Passion.

I want to read for you from two masters of Christian life & spirituality: first, from St. Bernard - "Christian, let Christ teach you how to love Him. Learn to love him with sweetness, prudence and strength. With sweetness, lest counter-attractions charm you: with prudence, lest they beguile you: with strength, lest they overcome you and turn you from the love of Our Lord. Let Christ grant you his sweeter wisdom, lest worldly glory or fleshly desires carry you away: let the truth of Christ enlighten you, lest the spirit of error and falsehood separate you from him; let Christ, the power of God, strengthen you, lest adversity wear you down. Let your zeal be inflamed by clarity, informed by knowledge, and strengthened by perseverance. Let it be fervent, prudent, and invincible, never growing

likewise, new look, new kind. After all, are not these precepts implied in God's commandment: '~~you~~ shall love the Lord ~~the~~ <sup>you</sup> God with all ~~the~~ <sup>your</sup> heart, with all your soul, with all your strength'."

Finally, the Benedictine monk, abbot of Norwold in Belgium some 50 years ago, a man whose spirituality and devotion to Christ anticipated in many ways modern developments in the Church, Dom Columba Merton.

[Manual of Coll. Prayers: p 347-368]