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18 FRIDAY

FEAST of SACRED HEART of JESUS

Ezech 34: 11-16

Ps 22: 1-6

Romans 5: 5-11

Luke 15: 3-7

The heart is a universal image for love. So, in the church, the “sacred heart” of Jesus became an image to express God’s divine love, in a way that people might find more immediately understandable. As a widespread devotion, it’s the origin and focus of today’s Feastday. The scripture readings in the day’s liturgy this year centre on one of the more striking images used by Jesus, and by prophets and poets before Him --- the shepherd caring single-mindedly for his sheep, even to the point of folly. In the case of Jesus himself, that “folly” was the sacrificing of His own life to save all those given into His care by His father. When Jesus talked about a shepherd searching for just one lost sheep from a flock, He was responding to criticism of Him that He mixed with and ate with people known to be ‘sinners’. He was saying how wild and extravagant is God’s love for just one person in need. How valuable, after all, is one sheep out of a hundred ? worth risking leaving all the others to go astray ? But when you lose something, and go looking for it, doesn’t it become more valuable in your eyes ? So, finding someone/something lost is a more intense joy than the ordinary enjoyment of caring and appreciating. In Jesus, God cares immensely for each one of us, especially the weak, needy, lost, ‘sinners’. He loves totally. And our response ? Surely it can’t just be in words, but expressed in really loving and caring for the sinners of our world, as Jesus did. Do we do that much ? Can we share the love of His heart ?

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