

for, as St. Paul says, "God for His exceeding charity loved us, *even when we were dead in sin.*" (Eph. ii. 5.) And again: "God commendeth His charity towards us, because *when as yet we were sinners*, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8, 9.) It is sweet to plunge into this ocean without effort to fathom it.

2. Again, the Heart of Jesus is the *broadest*, or most comprehensive, of *all hearts*. Every individual member of the human race is known to It, and loved by It. No strangers are any of us to Him—all His "friends," His "brethren," His "members." To Jesus alone can be fully applied the poet's words: "I am a man and nothing human is strange to me." Jesus loves each of us just as if one of us alone were with Him in the world. The immensity of His love does not impair its personalness. Look at the reflected image of the sun in a fountain on a calm day. Therein glows the entire solar image, and that same image glows entire in every lake and fountain and stream and pool under the same circumstances. Thus Jesus gives Himself to each and all *entire*. And, without seeking illustrations from nature, does not the Holy Eucharist, the special Sacrament of the Heart of Jesus, render this truth vividly apparent? The multitude of communicants, each and each, receive Him whole and entire.

3. The Heart of Jesus is the *most compassionate* of *all hearts*. He knows every affliction of the human family in general and particular. He is the Mercy Seat, always accessible by day and by night. He is like a temple standing in the centre of the universe, built with such consummate art that the slightest sound here below is distinctly heard. The Heart of Jesus echoes our most secret sighs. Harken to the words of St. Paul: "Nowhere did He take hold of the Angels, but of the seed of Abraham He taketh hold. Wherefore it behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become a *merciful* and faithful high-priest." (Heb. ii. 16, 17.) "For we have not a high-priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one, tempted in all things such as we are, without sin." (Heb. iv. 15.) How beautiful and soothing is this doctrine! Christ, naturally pitiful and compassionate, determined to undergo all our miseries, except sin, to become compassionate by His own experience, or, rather, to excite in us a greater confidence in His compassion. For mercy is acquired in the school of suffering: and whereas, happily, we are spared from experiencing *all* the many forms of suffering, few can say "*all* the heights and the billows have passed over me." (Ps. xli. 8.) It was otherwise with Christ. Thus in the loss of friends, who can feel so much for us as He who wept over the grave of Lazarus, in sympathy for His desolate friends? (St. John x. 33.) If we are deceived by those whom we trusted, who can feel so much as He who was betrayed, sold, given up to death by His chosen one? If we groan under the weight of calumny, stung to madness by the fangs of slander, who can so readily share our feelings as He who "endured such opposition from sinners against Himself?" (Heb. xii. 3.) If we suffer mental pain, a thousand-fold more agonising than bodily pain, let us find patience in the shades of Gethsemane. If we are tried in our worldly goods or in our health, if we are reduced to poverty or abased by contumely, He has experienced it all, nor is He a stranger to any heart torture. Nay, more, He has *remedies* for all. He never beheld suffering but He was touched, and never touched but He gave solace.

Nor can we say that now, seated on Heaven's highest throne, He has lost His human feelings. He lovingly remembers the crib and the coarse swaddling clothes; His lowly mother; the carpenter's shop; the ignominy of the Cross. We can, covered with the rags of our mortality and misery, present ourselves trustfully in His Kingly Court and announce ourselves His brethren. Our prayers have no discordant note amid the resounding songs of the elect; nor will they pass unheard like the beggar's wail amid the revelry of Dives. How significant the divine saying, "*My thoughts are not your thoughts!*" The Son-of-God is

not ashamed of a nature which He preferably assumed. "He is not ashamed to call us *brethren.*" (Heb. ii. 11.) Only those will he be ashamed of—as He declares—who have been ashamed of Him here, and have refused to confess Him before men. (St. Mark viii. 38.) Ashamed of our nature, indeed! Why, He deigns through it to make known "the manifold wisdom of God to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places." (Eph. iii. 10.) What a glorious achievement to make from this clay of ours cherubim and seraphim! When Christ returned to His Father He did not say: "I go to reap my victory, I go to receive the homage of the heavenly powers." No; "I go to prepare a *place* for you." (St. John xiv. 2.) He would silence the choirs of Heaven rather than leave unheeded a cry of the least of His own.

4. The Heart of Jesus is the *most generous* of *all hearts*. The sublime is the element of His intelligence and heroism, the element of His Heart. He is more than a hero, as we understand the term. He is love personified. "God is love." (St. John iv. 8.) A hero is one who by force of character towers above his fellows by some almost superhuman effort. But Christ "went about doing good." (Acts x. 33.) He sacrificed Himself as a holocaust *without any effort*, as without any display. "His work was as natural"—says St. Francis de Sales—"as when a mother soothes herself by nursing her infant." He bestowed the unspeakable boon of the Holy Eucharist at His Last Supper with less ostentation than a rich man would give a piece of bread to a beggar. Read the simple story in the Gospel and judge for yourselves.

5. The Heart of Jesus is the *most indulgent* of *all hearts*. Jesus being our Creator "knoweth whereof we are made. He remembereth that we are dust." (Ps. cii. 14.) Behold, for instance, His indulgence to the woman taken in adultery: "Woman, where are they that accused thee? Hath no man condemned thee?" "No man, Lord." "Neither will I condemn thee: go, and now sin no more." (St. John viii. 1 to 11.) Another sinner, publicly known as such, comes to the festal board and bathes His sacred feet with her tears. His self-righteous fellow-guests despise her, but He declares that He prefers her repentance to the scornful conceit of the Pharisee. (St. Luke vii. 37 to 50.) The profoundly bigoted Samaritans refuse Him a passage through their town. James and John, jealous of their Master's honor, wish to call down fire from heaven upon the offenders. He replies: "The Son of Man came not to destroy souls but to save." (St. Luke ix. 52 to 55.) We also know how compassionately He wept over guilty Jerusalem at the foresight of her tremendous chastisement: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, but thou wouldst not." (St. Matt. xxiii. 37.) Peter thrice denies his Master: Jesus punishes him with a look of tenderness. (St. Luke xxii. 61.) And in the bitterness of His last awful hour on His uplifted Cross He cries: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." (St. Luke xxii. 34.)

6. Finally, the Heart of Jesus is the *tenderest* of *all hearts*. See Him surrounded by the eager Hebrew mothers asking Him to bless their children. His disciples want to send them away, but He graciously invites them. "Suffer the little children to come unto Me." "And embracing them and laying His hands upon them, He blessed them." (St. Mark x 13, 17.) Who does not recollect the Saviour's friendship for the youngest of the sons of Zebedee, and for the family of Bethany? What a thrill of satisfaction devout souls feel at hearing the virgin apostle glorify himself by the title, "The disciple that Jesus loved." Who has not envied him the place that he occupied at the Last Supper—Jesus' breast? Who would not have been in his place when Jesus said to His Mother, "Woman, behold thy Son"?

And this Love of the Sacred Heart, so *vivid*, *compassionate*, *generous*, *indulgent*, and *tender*, is a

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