



# LIGHT & LIFE

VOICE OF THE ROSARY CENTER & CONFRATERNITY

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Fr. Joseph Sergott, O.P., Director May - June 2019, Vol 72, No 3 Western Dominican Province

The human heart is the universal symbol of love. It is also the vital organ at the center of the body that directs the blood flow throughout the body. When the heart is healthy and thriving, we thrive; however, when the heart withers, we wither, and when it stops—we die. In "The Immaculate Heart of Mary", Fr. Paul Duffner, O.P. teaches that while the heart controls the flow of blood through the arteries and veins according to the needs of the body, it is itself influenced by thoughts of the mind and acts of the will which affect our emotional nature. Thus, the heart can beat fast or slow, strong or weak—according to how it reacts to these impressions. This interaction between body and soul seems to affect the movement of the heart more than any other part of the body. Thus, we can begin to realize how love and other acts of the will are linked to the heart.

The lexicons of many languages are filled with sayings that use the heart as an expression of the emotions that dwell deep within us. We speak of people having a *big heart*, of being *faint-of-heart*, of being *broken-hearted*, of having a *heart of gold*, of having a *bleeding heart*, of having a *heavy heart*, of being *young at heart*, or speaking to each other *heart-to-heart*.

The heart is recognized as the spiritual core of the human being. In Judaism, as seen throughout the Old Testament, the heart is perceived as being the seat of the emotional and intellectual life. Proverbs 4:23 says, "With all vigilance guard your heart, for in it are the sources of life." This speaks of the moral, spiritual and the physical life of the human being. (*Jewish Encyclopedia*)

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, "The heart is our hidden center, beyond the grasp of our reason and of others; only the Spirit of God can fathom the human heart and know it fully. The heart is the place of decision, deeper than our psychic drives. It is the place of truth, where we choose life or death. It is the place of encounter . . . it is the place of covenant." (CCC #2563)

The heart is the place where we give love and receive love; it is the well of compassion and mercy. It is the place where we retreat from the world, where we go to reflect, where

we grapple with mysteries, where we make decisions, and especially where we meet God himself. Sometimes even our own heart can be a mystery to us.

The human heart takes on a different dimension though when we speak of the Heart of Jesus.

Jesus Christ is fully human; he has a human heart that beats just like ours—even now in his resurrected body! Where this



image begins to test our comprehension is when we recall that he is also fully divine as the only begotten Son of the Father. His divine nature however has not "swallowed up" his human nature. In the Incarnation, his human nature, body and soul, was assumed by his divine being for all of eternity. "The Son of God therefore communicates to his humanity his own personal mode of existence in the Trinity. In his soul as in his body, Christ thus expresses humanly the divine ways of the Trinity." (CCC #470) Thus, we can say that in Jesus Christ God truly loves us with a human heart.

In his time on earth, Jesus expressed human emotions that revealed what was hidden in his own heart. We can recount when Jesus was sorrowful and fearful, when he laughed and felt joy, when he wept, and even when he got angry. We

recall how Jesus showed empathy when he encountered people who were lost, "At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd" (Mt 9:36); or, when they were hungry, "My heart is moved with pity for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat" (Mk 8:2); or, when they were ill, "His heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick" (Mt 14:14). In all cases, his heart was grieved and Our Lord filled the needs of the people.

Then of course there is the poignant event after Jesus died on the cross, documented by an eyewitness (Cf. Jn 19:35), when a soldier thrust his lance into Jesus' side and immediately blood and water flowed out. (Jn 19:34) This profound symbolism of blood and water flowing from the Heart of Christ calls to mind the beginnings of the Church

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# THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

## The Importance of Intimacy

By Br. John Winkowitsch, O.P.

[Br. John Winkowitsch, OP was born and raised in Cut Bank, MT. A convert to the Catholic faith, Br. John was baptized during his freshman year at Thomas Aquinas College in Santa Paula, CA. After earning his B.A. in Liberal Arts, he began graduate philosophy studies at The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. Upon completion of a Ph.D. in 2016, he promptly joined the Western Dominican Province and has lived happily ever after.]

“Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it.” (*Redemptor Hominis* §10)

### WHAT IS INTIMACY?

The 40th anniversary of *Redemptor Hominis*, Pope St. John Paul the Great’s first encyclical, was celebrated on March 4th, 2019. I want to begin this reflection on the nature of love and intimacy with the above quotation because it helps us see not only the importance of love, but also provides a guide for how to grow in love so that we are able to “participate intimately in it.” Without love, we are lost. In such a void, the first experience that draws us towards intimacy is a revelation of love. That revelation is then encountered, which gives us our first opportunity to experience love. We must nevertheless actively receive that love to make it our own, and then, once we have our own ability to love, we are able to love in return and thus participate in loving intimacy.

The process of growth in love, from first revelation to intimately participating, is the work of an entire lifetime and the ultimate vocation of every human being. Whether you are single, religious, married, or in Holy Orders, your vocation is to love, and to love intimately. St. Catherine of Siena, the great Dominican mystic, expressed this same truth in her Dialogue, albeit with a with a gardener’s touch: “All of you are trees of love: You cannot live without love because I made you for love.” St. Catherine wisely recognizes that, like trees, we grow in love. We grow in love with other people and with God. However, grace builds on nature, so first we will look at how we naturally grow in love and intimacy with other people.

### INTIMACY WITH OTHERS: FRIENDSHIP

I would like to suggest three practical ways of growing in intimacy with other people in your life. Whether you are married or single, a priest or a nun, these three important activities are vital to living your vocation well and loving your neighbor, as Jesus taught us.

First, we must spend time communicating with other people. In today’s world, we have many ways to communicate. Unfortunately, social media, texting, and email tend to leave us feeling empty inside. Why is this? I think part of the problem is that we are failing to communicate on all the nonverbal levels, and thus much of our communication is emotionally and spiritually empty. To grow in intimacy in our relationships with our loved ones, no matter if we’re celibate

or married, we need to communicate fully and make choices that give us the opportunity to do so. Invite friends over for a dinner party. Start a book club to discuss ideas with friends, or a writing club to discuss stories with friends. Make the effort to always eat dinner around the table with others. Set aside time to discuss your day with people, such as a lunch break or a drink after work. All these suggestions will provide opportunities to communicate naturally and fully so that we can develop a fulfilling intimacy with others.

Second, we must spend time doing things with other people. As counterintuitive as it may sound, working side-by-side with someone on a common project or task draws you together in a way that simply communicating cannot. There is a bond of trust that develops when you work with someone on the same task, play with each other as teammates in a sports league, or help each other out in a remodeling project. Whereas communicating leads to an intimacy of ideas and feelings, doing things with friends leads to an intimacy of wills.

Third, we must spend time just being with another to grow in intimacy. One wise priest I know would commonly give the same advice to couples who were having difficulties in their marriage: take a daily walk together. Sure, conversation would arise naturally, but even if no words were said, the simple act of just being together on a walk would draw the couple closer together. If you can sit comfortably in silence with another person, that is a sure sign of intimacy in the relationship.

### CONNECTION: GRACE BUILDS ON NATURE

One of the most beautiful truths found in the Catholic faith is that grace builds on nature. Thus, as we strive for intimacy in our natural human relationships by the three ways listed above, we are growing in natural virtue and our capacity to receive the grace necessary to grow in intimacy with our Lord Jesus Christ. We are called to love God and our neighbor. We cannot focus entirely on our relationship with God while ignoring our neighbor and expect to grow closer to Christ. Rather, by growing in intimacy with our friends, family, and loved ones in our daily lives, we are also building a natural foundation upon which the grace of supernatural charity can be built. But what exactly is charity?

### INTIMACY WITH THE LORD: CHARITY

At the very heart of the *Summa Theologiae*, question 256 of the 512 questions that St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, he asks, “What is Charity?” At this exact midpoint of the Angelic Doctor’s most famous theological work, he explains that the supernatural virtue of charity we all strive for as Christians can be understood as an intimate friendship with God. Thankfully, because we know that grace builds on nature, we can also identify three ways of growing in intimacy with the Lord that mirror the three ways discussed above that allow us to grow in intimacy with other people.

First, just as we should spend time communicating with other people, so also must we spend time praying to the Lord if we desire to grow in intimacy with Him. In Fr. Romano

Guardini’s classic book, *The Art of Praying*, he informs us in the introduction that “anyone who takes his relationship to God seriously soon sees that prayer is not merely an expression of the inner life which will prevail on its own, but is also a service to be performed in faith and obedience. Thus, it must be willed and practiced.” True intimacy is faithful in both good times and bad times. If we only prayed when we felt like it, our communication would be just as superficial as our temporary feelings. Rather, we must make a habit of prayer, such that we spend time talking with our Lord not only when things are great (or a disaster!), but also during the normal, boring, and everyday events of our lives. Intimacy with our Lord is found in regular, consistent prayer. He wants to be part of our everyday lives.

Second, just as we should spend time doing things with other people, so we should also spend time doing things with God by striving to conform our wills to His. While communicating with others allows us to share our thoughts and feelings with them, doing things with others allows us to share our wills with each other. It is the same in our relationship with Jesus. One of the fruits of regular, intimate conversation with our Lord in prayer is an awareness of His will for our lives. Of course, it is important to remember that communication is a two-way street, so we must spend as much time listening as speaking in our prayer with the Lord. If we listen well, we will recognize His will, thus giving us opportunities for doing things with Him.

Third, just as we should simply spend time being with other people, so we should also simply spend time being with our Lord Jesus in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Fr. Norris Clarke relates an adorable story in his article, “The Creative Imagination.” He asked a group of grade school children to explain what they do when they pray. One girl answered, “When I pray, I make like a flower before God.” Although not everyone will relate to this image, it is nevertheless very effective at expressing the importance of spending time just being in the presence of God in adoration. The intimacy borne of adoration is not a knowledge of thoughts or feelings, nor even a union of wills, but rather an intimacy that reaches to the very essence of ourselves: our very being.

### CONCLUSION: WE WERE MADE FOR INTIMACY

Intimacy is the fruit of growing in our vocation to love. The foundation of this process is God’s love for us, out of which we were created. As Jesus says to St. Catherine of Siena in her Dialogue, “I created you without your help, without your ever asking me, because I loved you before you even existed, but I will not save you without your help.” The “help” here that Jesus is talking about is cooperating with His grace to make His love our own. Once we see that we are loved by God, we can participate ever more intimately in our relationships with other people and with Jesus Himself. As St. Catherine says about the human soul: “she loves every person with the same love she sees herself loved with.” Once we recognize the love Jesus has for us, both in creating us and laying down his life in love on the cross to save us, we can return that love to others.

However, as we continue to “work out our salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12) by striving to love God and neighbor, we must always remember to have patience, “the queen who reigns over all the virtues because she is the heart of love” according to St. Catherine. We must be

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## What would the Blessed Virgin say about Intimacy?

by Br. John Winkowitsch, O.P.

Mary is a model for how we can grow in loving intimacy, both with the people around us and with her son, Jesus. In the following three examples from Sacred Scripture, we can see various ways that Mary intimately participates in love and invites us to do the same.

First, “Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.” (Luke 1:39-40) Communication is essential to participating intimately in loving relationships. Mary shows us the importance of communicating naturally and fully by making the effort to be present to Elizabeth in person. Rather than simply writing a letter or sending a greeting through someone else, Mary makes the long trek “into the hill country” to share in the joy of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Mary reminds us all that it is always worth the effort to visit our friends in person.

Second, at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee, Mary said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” (John 2:5) Mary’s admonition is applicable to all of us, as we should all strive to do whatever Jesus tells us to do. When we are obedient to the will of God, there is a twofold result that helps us grow in intimacy with both Jesus and the people around us. We grow in intimacy with Jesus because our wills — and our desires — become guided by Him. Also, just as the servants at the wedding feast in Cana work together to fill the jars with water, so also will we find ourselves cooperating with other Christians in serving Jesus. By following the will of Jesus, we grow not only in intimacy with our Heavenly Father, but also in intimacy with our fellow believers.

Third, St. John the Evangelist gently reminds us that “standing by the cross of Jesus was his mother.” (John 19:25) After all had been communicated, after all had been done, Mary continued being by the side of her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. At this very moment, when Mary is at the foot of the cross, Jesus gives her to His disciple — to all of us! — and says, “Behold, your mother!” (John 19:27) When we take Mary into the home of our heart, she gives us the strength and courage to always keep our eyes focused on her Son, Jesus, who is the alpha and omega of all true intimacy. He loved us before we existed, and He will love us for all eternity. Just like Mary, we are called to encounter that love every day and to share it with all.

**I praise you, LORD, with all my heart; I will declare all your wondrous deeds. (Psalm 9)**

### **Intimacy** (continued from page 3)

patient with ourselves and others in the wake of our many failures. We live in a fallen world where everyone is learning to grow in love and intimacy. Our patience in bearing with our own failings and the faults of others is a good yardstick by which we can measure how far we have grown in our vocation to love intimately. As Jesus says in Dialogue with St. Catherine, "patience is a sure sign that the soul loves me perfectly and without self-interest." So, trust in the love of Jesus, strive to love intimately, and always be patient my friends! ■

**He shepherded them with a pure heart;  
with skilled hands he guided them.  
(Psalm 78)**

### **Sacred Heart** (continued from page 1)

with its two fundamental sacraments of Baptism and Holy Eucharist.

*Lumen Gentium* explains, "To carry out the will of the Father, Christ inaugurated the Kingdom of heaven on earth and revealed to us the mystery of that kingdom. By His obedience He brought about redemption. The Church, or, in other words, the Kingdom of Christ now present in mystery, grows visibly through the power of God in the world. This inauguration and this growth are both symbolized by the blood and water which flowed from the open side of a crucified Jesus, and are foretold in the words of the Lord referring to His death on the Cross: 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself.'" (LG, #3)

The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus most-likely originated in the Middle Ages; however, it reached its pinnacle with the apparitions to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690). To this day though the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Many faithful Catholics still honor and revere the Sacred Heart for all of the reasons mentioned above.

In the Church's long history there have been times where the faithful could relate easier to either the divine nature of Christ or to his human nature. Some theologians theorize that the devotion to the Sacred Heart was born out of a need to relate to the human side of Jesus in an age where Jesus, as the Son of God, seemed difficult to approach. However, as believers we need to see the whole person of Christ who is both human and divine. The Divine Person who is the Son of God, who has no beginning and will have no end, is the same Person who is the humble Good Shepherd who seeks out the lost sheep, loves the adulterer and forgives her, chats with the woman at the well, dines with sinners, and offers paradise to the Good Thief!

The Son of God worked with human hands; he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will and loved us with a human heart. (CCC #470) For this reason, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, pierced by our sins and for our salvation, "is a symbol of that divine love which He shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit but which He, the Word made flesh, alone manifests through a weak and perishable body, since 'in Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily.'" (Col 2:9)" (Pope Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas*, #55; Cf. CCC #478)

It is this same Jesus who refers to his own heart when encouraging us to not be afraid to approach him and to accept the challenges that we each face. He says, "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light." (Mt 11:28-30)

It is the Sacred Heart of Jesus who invites us to enter into his own heart, where we will find a place of rest and peace, the well of Divine Mercy and forgiveness, intimacy with God (!), the origins of Love itself, and the wisdom to help us fathom all of the deep mysteries of God. But how do we enter into the Sacred Heart of Jesus?

The Blessed Virgin Mary understands the heart of her Son and seeks to assist us in this endeavor. When Jesus was still in her womb, their two hearts beat in unison only a few inches apart. Then at Jesus' birth, as Mary pondered all of the amazing things the shepherds told her about her child that they heard from angels, she "kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart." (Lk 2:19) After Joseph and Mary has lost Jesus for three days, once they had found him Mary had to return to her own heart to ponder the deep mysteries of just who this child is. As scripture tells us, "He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart." (Lk 2:51) Finally, we see the ultimate link between the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus as she remained with him at the foot of the cross, with their anguished hearts intertwined.

As we reflect upon the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary and what they symbolize, let us also turn to look into our own hearts. Jesus tells us, "Where your treasure is, there also will your heart be." (Mt 6:21, Lk 12:34) Where is my own heart? Does it seek to be united with that of Our Lord? Pope Leo XIII says, "There is in the Sacred Heart, the symbol and express image of the infinite love of Jesus Christ which moves us to love in return." (*Annun Sacrum* #8) If we are not at the place yet where we can unite our own heart with the Lord's, then let us take scripture to heart: "Seek the LORD, your God; and you shall indeed find him when you search after him with your whole heart and your whole soul." (Dt 4:29)

Perhaps the best way to enter into the Sacred Heart of Jesus is to go in to the very recesses of your own heart, and in the quiet of that place make an act of the will where you openly invite the Love of God to dwell there—even if you don't quite know what to say to him—then let the Good Shepherd show you the way from there. ■

## **Note from Fr. Joseph**

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*Fr. Joseph Sergott, O.P., Director*