

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

The Sacred Heart Pumping Love Solemnity of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque;
Solemnity of the Dedication of St. Margaret Mary Church Friday, October 16, 2015
7:30 PM Eph 3:14-19; **Mt 11:25-30** (St. Hedwig) Healing Mass (It is through this
human heart that God has chosen to bring salvation to his creation. It is still a work in
progress in our own lives personally and in the world as a whole.)

I don't know how many of you know about **St. Margaret Mary**, but **she was a promoter of the devotion to Sacred Heart**. She came by this as a gift from God. She did not make it up and it did not originate with her. It was a devotion that had grown up during the Middle Ages, but it became important for her. **She was herself personally suffering from a mental illness of a sort**. She was what is calling a "cutter"; she cut herself. This is a condition some people suffer from. There is something about themselves that they are rejecting or hating or rebuking. Now whether this was merely a personal wrinkle in her makeup or whether this was partially a result of the kind of environment she lived in, I do not know. She lived in an environment, **in a Church environment—she was a nun—that was very harsh**.

There was a movement at that time called "**Jansenism**," and it was started by a Belgian bishop by the name of Cornelius Jansenius. Well, he was well-meaning, but! And these Jansenist people were all well-meaning, but they suffered from a sort of **inordinate strictness or severity**. Some people said they were holier than God, or thought they were, or tried to be. This did that come from Bishop Jansenius. This is a tendency people have or can have and, in a way, it is **the result of the conflict that exists between our human experience and the word of God we receive in revelation**. In the Old Testament the word of God says that God is just and God will reward the good and punish the evil. But when we look at our world, we don't see that. We don't see the evil being punished; we see them prosper. In fact, even the psalms lament this at great length. The psalms lament the fact that **the evil prosper. How can this be? Likewise the good suffer. How can this be?** In the New Testament God is love, but we don't see a world full of love or a world where the loving succeed and prosper and those who are not loving melt away. We don't see a world like that. **So this creates a conflict**.

So the response of some people is to say, well, the reason the world is the way it is, is because people are so bad. People are bad and therefore the world is bad, and we suffer from their sinfulness. Now some people project this badness onto others, but not themselves; other people take it on themselves. Either way it can be exaggerated. The truth is people are stupid and people are ignorant and people are weak and often afraid, and because of these qualities they make bad choices—that's true. But the vast majority of people are not really bad, although some are. The vast majority of people who are good are sometimes good in a rather weak way. So what we have to realize first and foremost is that **the world the way it is now is not really what God intends**. God is trying to bring it to another place. Some Bible scholars like to talk about the history of salvation, and they begin it long-ago with Abraham or even before Abraham, and they show how slowly it progresses—well, very slowly. **Christ** of course is the Word God, the Second Person of the divine Trinity, who took on a human nature, who suffered, died, and rose again **to reveal to us the great power of divine love and the great power of divine life; and yet the world continues to limp along** not really

basking in the light of God, not really thriving in the energy of divine love, for whatever reason.

So **Margaret Mary** lived in a very dark time, and she had a great darkness in her own life. **God entered into her life in a very powerful way giving her visions and experiences of his great love.** And it was all centered on this idea of **the Sacred Heart**, a human heart. God has taken upon himself a human heart. This human heart bleeds like any heart that is pierced. This heart feels like any human heart, experiences pain and love and all the emotions, hurt. **It is through this human heart that God has chosen to bring salvation to his creation.** But it is still a work in progress. **It is still a work in progress in our own lives personally and in the world as a whole.**

It is good for us if we take some time to try to think about: **What is God really trying to do in my life now?** What is God really trying to say to me now? How is the message of Holy Scripture, especially the message of the gospel, how is that really manifesting itself in my life now, **or in the life of our community of faith, because usually God works through others?** Although in the case of **Margaret Mary** it was a rather direct and immediate experience.

But now through her **we have a mediated experience of the same thing she had:** the love of God beating for us as the heart beats, pumping blood to keep us alive—**the heart of God pumping love to keep was alive.** And yet so much of this goes on without our awareness. God's work is continuing, but we often don't see it, feel it, sense it, or know about it. **And sometimes we ignore it.** And when we do that, **we are depriving ourselves of some wonderful share in goodness, in strength, in health.** And we all need to share as much as possible in the strength and the goodness and the health of God. The word "salvation" actually means health, *salus*. **We are praying for the salus of the world, the salus of the Church, the salus of each of our own lives: body, mind, and soul.**

And we need to realize that it is **God's plan to bring about exactly that;** but how, we do not know. Last month a woman told me that many years ago her husband came to one of these Masses with diabetes. After being prayed over he went home and took his medicine. The medicine made him sick. The next day he took the medicine again; it made him sick. He went to the doctor; the doctor said, "Oh, you don't have diabetes anymore." **Why was he healed of diabetes and other people were not? This no one can answer. God works in mysterious ways.** But I do know that **when we are open to God's grace, we do receive a gift.** It may not be the gift we are looking for, but it will be a gift.

St. Margaret Mary was a woman that suffered much, but she gained much from her suffering: a very unusual **intimacy with the risen Christ**, really a spousal intimacy. Through her intercession and with her help let us all continue on that road to final healing and fulfillment.