

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Sharing Our Burdens**      The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus      Friday, June 23, 2017  
8:15 AM    Dt 7:6-11;    **1 Jn 4:7-16;    Mt 11:25-30**    (God never hates even his enemies, but pities them. He actually extends to them the potential to change and be transformed into friends.)

Today we are celebrating the feast of the Sacred Heart, and the heart is a symbol, and through Christ it has become a very specific symbol. In the Bible the word “heart” refers to the inner room of the human mind or consciousness, specifically to the will, not to the world of feelings as it often seems in the West and in our poetry and language. But it is of the will, and **it is the will of Jesus to join himself to humanity and to share our burdens which existence entail.** Every human being who lives on this earth is burdened; it is part of the nature of life itself. God has come into our lives to bear our burdens with us, to yoke himself to our plows, so to speak. **And this is the humility of heart that Jesus himself claims and demonstrates in his life.**

But moreover, on the cross **Jesus chose in his will to give himself totally**, to pour himself out totally, to give of his life and love, his love embodied in his life. All that is **symbolized by the blood that flowed out of him when the lance pierced his side.** For John the evangelist, who is the great symbolic theologian of the New Testament, that flow of blood and water, because it says both, is **the source of the two great sacraments, Baptism and Eucharist**, whereby the very substance of God pulls us together into one body and then nourishes us. And thus the heart of Jesus becomes a symbol of this givingness, this effusion of life and love that the cross demonstrated.

When we celebrate the Sacred Heart of Jesus we are celebrating God’s love for us, as it said in the second reading. The mystery is not that we love God. That is what many religions promote: we should all love God, we should do this, we should do that. But the gospel of Jesus

Christ says that **God loves us**; that's different. And that is not, as far as I can tell, very common in religious doctrines worldwide—as far as I can tell. I could be corrected, but I don't see it proposed by world religions that God loves us and that God loves us with an unconditional love.

Now **you can understand a little bit of this in regard to your own children**. If you have children and they really are stupid or lazy or self-destructive, you are absolutely beside yourself with even anger at their stupidity or their self-destruction or their laziness. You are very upset, but you don't really stop loving them. In fact the reason you are upset is that you do love them. If you didn't love them, you wouldn't care, you would be indifferent. Well, **God is never indifferent to his own creation**. Many of the gods of the ancient pantheon were indifferent, but not the God whom Jesus revealed—never indifferent.

Now it might even happen in some perverse sense that your child might become your enemy, might actually try to harm you; it has happened, not often, but it has happened. But even there, most likely you would not hate that child. You might pity that child, and you might fear that child, but you never really hate that child. And so **God never hates even his enemies, but pities them**. But he does more than pity them because he is God. **He actually extends to them the potential to change and be transformed into friends**. Now you can't necessarily do that. You can't make someone, you can't give someone, the power to love. They either have that or they don't. But **God is the source of the power to love. And God can extend that even to his enemies, and does**. And **all this is enveloped in the mystery of the Sacred Heart of Jesus**, and it's this mystery we celebrate and profess today.