

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Devotion to the Sacred Heart** Twenty-eighth Week in Ordinary Time Monday, October 16, 2017 8:15 AM **St. Margaret Mary Alacoque**, virgin Patroness of our parish and the anniversary of dedication of the church 1 Jn 4:7-16; Mt 11:25-30 (We need to really pay close attention to Margaret Mary and to her belief and her practice of devotion to the Sacred Heart.)

As I mentioned, today is the feast of St. Margaret Mary. **St. Margaret Mary was the promoter of devotion to the Sacred Heart.** Now she didn't invent this; it arose in the Middle Ages. But **she discovered a very powerful source of healing in the image of the Sacred Heart.** She had a lot of problems. She was what today is called a "cutter." someone who harms himself or herself, for whatever reason. It's a sort of deep emotional issue, problem.

Now if you look at people, people have emotional problems. In fact one of the problems is they are so emotional *and* their emotions almost run their lives. **The two chief emotions that run people's lives are fear and anger.** If it weren't for fear and anger some people wouldn't feel anything. And this is a very serious problem, especially when confronted with the gospel of Jesus Christ, because **Christ says, "Fear is useless."** And although there is a holy kind of anger, most of it isn't. **Anger tends to poison the inner workings of the soul.**

The result of this is in the time of Margaret Mary, which is around the time of the Reformation, **in France there was a kind of reformation within the Catholic religion called "Jansenism."** Jansenism really came from Belgium, and it was a reform and it had many good ideas, as did actually Lutheranism. But it tended to be elitist. **It tended to exclude ordinary common people because they said, well, they are just too crude and they are run by their emotions and they can never understand the sublime teachings of Christ.** And the teachings of Christ are sublime. Ordinarily, ordinary thinking people cannot really comprehend much of what Jesus said. The parables are all conundrum. **We have to work at trying to understand what Jesus really meant, so did his disciples, and they even complained about it.**

But **Margaret Mary came to realize that through this devotion to the Sacred Heart the simplest soul could actually have access to the most sublime teachings of Christ.** Not on a verbal level, but **truly on a mystical level they could actually enter into the mystery of God's love and experience it as a transforming energy within their lives,** in spite of their lack of learning, in spite of their lack of sophistication. And this would gradually **free them from this domination of fear and anger** that is so common among people. It was therefore **through Margaret Mary that the Church freed itself from this reform movement called "Jansenism," or at least partially.** It really never completely freed itself in the seventeenth century or the eighteenth century. It was still around in the nineteenth and even in the twentieth century. Pope Pius X was still fighting Jansenism in the early 1900s. Nonetheless, I think **we need to really pay close attention to Margaret Mary and to her belief and her practice of devotion to the Sacred Heart,** because **the teaching of Christ,** although it is sublime, **cannot be reserved to a few.** It needs to penetrate and permeate the entire dough of humanity, so that it can become the bread that feeds the world.