

## Assistant Pastor's Column

by Fr. Paul Ward

SUNDAY, MAY 27, 2007, Pentecost Sunday

### The Month of June is for the Sacred Heart

*Series on the Sacred Heart (1/5): Introducing the Feast - this year, June 15*

All through May I am inclined to praise the Blessed Virgin, whom I love and to whom I entrust my salvation. Yet today I beg leave of you, Gentle Reader, to change themes, even though it is still *May*, Mary's month. I have much, much to say about the customary theme of *June*, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. For which, I now begin a small series on this devotion which summarizes all others, and I start with Pope Blessed Pius IX.

Pius IX had the longest pontificate in history: 32 years. The "pontificate" is basically the time from when a man begins being Pope until he dies. He is famous for cultivating the spiritual lives of the faithful, particularly by instituting the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This is the first of a series on devotion to the Sacred Heart.

Let us begin with some practical points, in particular, the date. After the Easter Season, which in some sense ends at the Ascension, but in another only after Pentecost, there are a number of important celebrations. This little list may help, in which I place the dates for this year's celebrations in parentheses.

- *Pentecost*: Fifty days after Jesus rose from the dead (May 27)

- *Holy Trinity*: The Sunday after Pentecost (June 3)

- *Corpus Christi (Body and Blood of Christ)*: A Holy Day of Obligation, on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday; in the Archdiocese of Detroit, this day is moved to Sunday, and the obligation to attend Mass is due to it being Sunday, the Lord's day. (June 10)

- *Sacred Heart of Jesus*: The octave after Corpus Christi, when this is celebrated on its proper day on Thursday; and so, it is always 19 days after Pentecost, always on Friday (June 15)

- *Immaculate Heart of Mary*: the day after the Sacred Heart (June 16)

Due to my great love for my mother in heaven,

I must also mention the Visitation, which is the last day of May (31st), Mary's month.

This feast venerates the Sacred Heart of Jesus wounded out of love for sinful man. One cannot help but think of the apparitions of Jesus to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690), a French Visitandine nun in Paray-le-Monial, Burgundy near the Eastern border of France. The apparitions happened from 1673-1675. It was on June 10, 1675, when our Lord said to her words which have moved the hearts of countless sinners to both hope and tears, "Behold this heart, which has loved men so much; and all that I have received is blasphemy, ingratitude, coldness and contempt in the Sacrament of my love."

These words remind me of what the Angel of Fatima said to the children, upon giving them Holy Communion, "Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men. Make reparation for their crimes and console your God."

The heart is not only the symbol of the seat of love within the person, it expresses that love as human, as felt in sentiment and emotion, and lived out in the flesh according to God's law. But the heart is also that part of the body of Jesus most horrendously outraged, when a soldier pierced it with a lance, to make sure the Messiah was in fact dead.

Blessed Pius IX transformed this already popular world-wide devotion into a universal feast for the whole church on June 16, 1875. Since then, Confraternities such as we have in our cluster, groups, prayer societies, schools, parishes and hospitals have formed under the name of the sacred heart, precisely to give more renown and glory to God's love for man, and to do reparation for man's sins against so loving a God.

In the next few weeks, I'll offer some further reflections upon the Sacred Heart based on Pope Pius XII's encyclical on the topic, *Haurietis Aquas*, or called in English, simply, *On Devotion to the Sacred Heart*.



Raffaello Sanzio (1483-1520), *The Sistine Madonna*, 1513-14, Oil on canvas, 270 x 201 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Dresden