

Assistant Pastor's Column

by Fr. Paul Ward

SUNDAY, JUNE 10, 2007, Corpus Christi (The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ)

The Bird's Eye View

Series on the Sacred Heart (3/5): Overview of Encyclical on Devotion to the Sacred Heart

No one loves man more than God.

The month of June is dedicated to a special type of meditation on God's love, which is both expressed and symbolized by the Sacred Heart of Jesus. As May is the month of the Rosary, June is the month of the Sacred Heart. This is why I am offering, in our bulletin articles, a series of reflections upon the Sacred Heart.

This week, I want to offer a summary of *Haurietis Aquas*, or in English *On Devotion to the Sacred Heart*, by **Pius XII**, promulgated on May 15, 1956. He published it 100 years after his predecessor Blessed Pius IX made the Friday at the end of the octave (eight days) after Corpus Christi a universal feast in honor of the Sacred Heart. In the next couple weeks, I will discuss some of the beautiful teachings we find in this encyclical.

Besides the introduction and conclusion, which every writing contains, *Haurietis Aquas* has three parts, or if I may paraphrase Julius Caesar, "*Encyclica est omnis divisa in partes tres.*"

First the Pope lays down the foundation of devotion to the Sacred Heart. He does so looking at God, at salvation history, and at the Church. He quotes his predecessor, Pope Pius XI who boldly declared, "Is not a summary of all our religion and, moreover, a guide to a more perfect life contained in this one devotion?" (*Miserentissimus Redemptor*, n. 3). For it leads us to know Christ, love Christ, and imitate Christ.

Second, the Pope does a study of the theology of this devotion. He does this in two steps.

By the first step, he analyzes the roots of

this devotion in Sacred Scripture and in the writings of Church Fathers.

By the second step, he offers what may be one of the most profoundly stirring of all Magisterial teachings. He gives the most marvelous meditation on the love of Jesus Christ! (I refer to paragraphs 62-89). How is it that God can love us with a human heart and in a human way? How is the love of the Sacred Heart present in the Eucharist? Is the "heart," indeed, a legitimate symbol for this love? And he finishes with the most worthy praise of the excessive forms of love – truly excessive abundance of love, I repeat! – which the Sacred Heart lavishes continually upon his Church.

The third part of the encyclical descends from such mystical heights, yet not too much to tell the truth, to expound on the development of devotion to the Sacred Heart until the contemporary day.

And so our Popes regularly exhort us to make devotion to the Sacred Heart a basic part of our own lives. We can do this by attending Mass on nine first Fridays in a row, and continuing always to do so as often as we can. We can also venerate the crucifix by prayer before it, kissing the image of Jesus' feet, or having a magnificent place for the crucifix in our homes. But Pope Pius most strongly recommends devotion to the Eucharist as the best way of having devotion to the Sacred Heart. Love for the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus is already strong in our cluster of parishes, thank God, and may it grow always stronger.

More good stuff next week!



Pope Pius XII. Life: 1876-1958, Pontificate: 1939-1958. His baptismal name is Eugenio Maria Giuseppe Giovanni Pacelli. His cause is up for canonization.