

## Assistant Pastor's Column

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### God's Trifold Love

*Series on the Sacred Heart (4/5): Jesus' Divine Love, Spiritual Love and Affectionate Love*

The love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is triple: first, it is the eternal love of the Eternal Son of God; second, it is the love of the human will of Jesus, who is that same God yet incarnate; third, it is the love of sentiment and emotion which this same Jesus experiences as man.

In other words, today we continue our mini-series about the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In the previous articles, we have seen the general idea of devotion to the Sacred Heart, its origins, and some of the key passages of some Popes on devotion to the Sacred Heart. Last week, we read a summary of Pope Pius IX's encyclical on this devotion. Now I invite us to focus more exactly on paragraphs 85-89, when the Pope most directly discusses the triple love of the Sacred Heart.

The Pope writes, "When we adore the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ, we adore in it and through it both the uncreated love of the divine Word and also its human love and its other emotions and virtues" (n. 89). So there are three loves: one love which stems from his divine nature, "uncreated love," then two loves stemming from his human nature: his spiritual love and his emotional love. To understand this better, let us look at the nature of all living things.

For those beings whose nature it is to live, such as trees and horses, and even men and angels, to live is the same as to be. Take its life away, and it stops being. There are other things, not exactly "dead" but "unalive," such as rocks

and water. One can't make it not be by killing it; no one can kill a rock. Living things have movement inside of them; this "movement" is different from their "being," yet these movements arise from their being. The power of such movements are what we call "faculties." Plants have the faculty of nutrition, growth and reproduction; animals add to that some more powers, particularly the power of knowing and loving even if only with their bodies. Man add to these faculties the power of knowing and loving in a spiritual way; these two faculties have the names of "intellect" and "will." All spiritual beings, including angels and the Divine Persons of the Trinity, have intellect and will.

When the Eternal Word took flesh from the womb of Mary, he added to the everlasting and divine love those powers of love which are common to all men: that of his will, which he has as a spiritual being; and his emotional affec-

tion, which he has because he is a bodily living thing.

Jesus therefore loves each one of us individually and perfectly with divine love, spiritual love, and affectionate love.

This is why the Pope writes, "The Heart of the Incarnate Word is deservedly and rightly considered the chief sign and symbol of that threefold love with which the divine Redeemer unceasingly loves His eternal Father and all mankind" (n. 54).

I can only encourage you, Gentle Reader, to take this teaching, a sure teaching taught by the Holy Father, of the "triple love" of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to leisurely hours of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.



Above: Pompeo Batoni, *Sacro cuore di Gesù*, Rome, "Il Gesù" Church (Jesuit) in Rome, ca. 1740.

Right: The context of this painting is offered in a view of the whole chapel.

