

40 Hours 2008 – Sacred Heart Parish, Lewistown
MONDAY (school night)

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Special object of the devotion to the Sacred Heart

Can anyone tell me...what is one of the major symbols we use or think about on Valentine's Day?

Of course – the heart! Now, WHY use the heart as a symbol for Valentine's Day?

(I'm sure one of the answers will be "love.")

Yes, the heart is the major symbol we use to talk about love. When we speak about a heart, we first think about our physical heart – that thing that beats in our chests. Without a heart – we wouldn't be alive, would we? What was it that the Tin Man wanted most of all? A heart. Now, this tells us something else – our heart is not ONLY our physical life, but – and the problem with the Tin Man – he wanted to love, but without a heart, he was unable to love. The heart is also the place where we locate our emotional life.

Did you ever hear of having a "heart to heart" talk with someone? What does that mean? Certainly it means that we open ourselves up to someone – we share with them some very personal thoughts or feelings – and you receive the same from the other person – it is a moment when you "give yourself" to another person – and you "receive" that other person. You talk, I mean, REALLY talk, without getting mad – hearing the other's perspective, listening, not only with your ears, but with your heart.

Our heart is the place where we have life – and the place where our emotions reside – the heart is kind of the center of who we are as human beings – at least symbolically.

What's the name of our parish and our parish school? Of course – Sacred Heart of Jesus. OK – take what we just said about *our* heart – and think about it in terms of Jesus' Heart. If the heart is the center of who *we* are, what can we say about Jesus' Heart? His heart represents and symbolizes the great love that He has for us – didn't we just hear about how deep was His love for us in the Gospel – the soldier comes to Christ and, seeing that He was already dead, pierced His heart with a lance and out flows blood and water – symbols of Jesus' love for us. THIS is what Jesus' heart symbolizes for us – how incredible and complete was His love for each and every one of us.

When we talk about having a devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus – we're not talking about a devotion to that organ which was in His chest – which was pierced – but a devotion to Jesus'

entire Body that died on the Cross for us, AND to all that His heart symbolizes – His LOVE for us – for each one of us.

Just as we symbolize our love by sending a boxful of candy, shaped like a heart, to represent and show our love to someone on Valentine's Day – so our devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus speaks of our love for Christ because of His love for us. And how do we see His heart? We see it wounded – pierced out of love for us. Look at the things we “see” on the image of Jesus' Sacred Heart: obviously there is a heart. But surrounding the heart is a crown of thorns – remember that crown of thorns they put on Jesus in order to make fun of him – a “crown” like a king would have – but not a crown of gold, but a crown of thorns which stuck Jesus in the head – which hurt Him, which caused His great suffering and pain. But this is our King – a King who suffers out of love for us – who is willing to give up everything for us, to save us, to give us His grace – but He is a King who suffers because His love for us is sometimes rejected and forgotten. There are flames coming up out of the top of Jesus' heart – symbolizing His burning love for us – and also there is a cross – the symbol of how much Jesus loves us – so much that he died on a cross for us.

But even beyond this important fact – which we heard in the Gospel – do you think that Jesus' Heart STILL hurts – is STILL wounded? Certainly we're not talking about his physical heart – but His heart as a symbol for His love. Do we ever wound Jesus' heart now? We certainly do – by our sins – when we turn against Jesus – when we deny Him through our actions or words – or even our thoughts and attitudes. We continue, to this day, to wound Jesus' heart – a heart that BURNS with love for us – and we continue to pierce it, as did the soldier at the cross.

The reason why devotion to Jesus' Sacred Heart is so important for us in our lives – and for our parish and school – is because in remembering Jesus' love for us – it makes us think about how we RESPOND to that love. If we are devoted to Jesus' Sacred Heart, if we dedicate ourselves to Jesus' Sacred Heart, if we offer our lives to Jesus every day – then it makes a difference in HOW WE live our lives. If, every day, when we wake up, when we get to our classroom, when we begin CCD class, when we eat dinner with the family, when we say our prayers at night with mom and dad – if EVERY DAY we say our prayers of dedication to Jesus' Sacred Heart, His Heart will transform US!

There are, in fact, some promises associated with those who have a Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We'll talk about them in more detail tomorrow, but some of them include: peace in our homes, comfort in our struggles and trials, tepid souls growing fervent (meaning that if we don't really LIVE the faith, we will begin to do so), souls that are fervent will become even more perfect.

Why is it that, during these 40 Hours Eucharistic Devotions, we are re-dedicating our parish and consecrating our lives and our classrooms and our families and our homes to Jesus' Most Sacred Heart? Because we ALL – me included – need to grow in fervor – to grow in love of Christ.

Jesus' Heart BURNS out of love for us. And here, on this altar, the proof of His love is present – the gift which He left us of His very Body and Blood – the Eucharist. As we worship and adore the most Holy Eucharist, we are able to be witnesses of the depths of Christ's love – symbolized in His Heart. We are able to be witnesses of His sacrifice – of His death on the cross – witnesses of His heart, pierced by a lance. We are able to speak to Christ, “heart to heart” and tell His heart of the love for Him that we have in our hearts.

Today, as we dedicate our school and our families to Jesus' Sacred Heart, let's not fail to tell Him how much we love Him – and as we pray every day and dedicate every day to Him – let's live our lives differently – with hearts full of His love.