

## Sacred Heart of Jesus – C

### Introduction

Popular piety, which had been effective in stemming the negative influences of protestantism, now became an effective antidote to the corrosiveness of rationalism and to the baleful consequences of Jansenism within the Church. It emerged strengthened and enriched from this task and from the extensive development of the parish missions. Popular piety emphasized certain aspects of the Christian mystery in a new way, for example, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and new "days", such as the "first Friday of the month", gained importance in the piety of the faithful.<sup>1)</sup>

At a time when Jansenism proclaimed the rigours of divine justice, the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus served as a useful antidote and aroused in the faithful a love for Our Lord and a trust in his infinite mercy symbolized by his Heart. St. Francis de Sales (+1622) adopted humility, gentleness (cf. Mt 11, 29) and tender loving mercy, all aspects of the Sacred Heart, as a model for his life and apostolate. The Lord frequently manifested the abundant mercy of his Heart to St. Margaret Mary (+1690); St. John Eudes (+1680) promoted the liturgical cult of the Sacred Heart, while St. Claude de la Colombière (+1682) and St. John Bosco (+1888) and other saints were avid promoters of devotion to the Sacred Heart.<sup>2)</sup>

### 1st Reading – Ezekiel 34:11-16

It is Ezekiel who pronounces the death sentence upon the kingdom with its entire political and religious structure of king, priest, and prophet. The earliest date

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[http://ch.catholic.or.kr/pundang/4/vatican/rc\\_con\\_ccdds\\_doc\\_20020513\\_vd\\_en.htm](http://ch.catholic.or.kr/pundang/4/vatican/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20020513_vd_en.htm)
  - 2) 이 단락의 출처는 다음의 문헌 [제목: 민간의 경의 혹은 존중과 함께 당연한 의무들에 대한 충실(popular piety) 및 전례에 대한 지침]의 제170항의 첫 번째 단락이다:  
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mentioned in his book is 593 B.C. and the latest is 571 B.C. He was one of those deported by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon in 597 B.C.

The book of Ezekiel falls into four major parts:

- 1) Chapters 1 through 24 which are threatening discourses before the fall of Jerusalem;
- 2) Chapters 25 through 32 which are oracles against the nations;
- 3) Chapters 33 through 39 which contain discourses of promise after the fall of Jerusalem (from which our reading for today comes); and
- 4) Chapters 40 through 48 which are descriptions of the future restoration of the Temple, Jerusalem, and Israel.

It is interesting that St. Jerome, in his preface to the book of Ezekiel notes that rabbinic tradition was that no one was permitted to read the beginning and the end of the book (also the beginning of Genesis and all of the Song of Songs) until he reached the age at which priests began their ministry (age 30) because "full maturity of human nature is necessary for perfect knowledge and mystical understanding" such as are called for by the material in these passages.

The ten verses preceding today's reading are a bitter indictment of the wicked shepherds of God's people. In today's reading we hear Yahweh proclaim that he will judge between the sheep and inaugurate an age of peace.

**11 For thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will look after and tend my sheep.**

Since the kings, priests, and prophets have been ineffective, and even led to denial of God, there will be a return to the theocracy, God will be in control. Biblical tradition sees God as Israel's shepherd (Psalm 23; Isaiah 40:11; Jeremiah 31:10).

**12 As a shepherd tends his flock when he finds himself among his scattered sheep, so will I tend my sheep. I will rescue them from every place where they were scattered when**

it was cloudy and dark. I will lead them out from among the peoples and gather them from the foreign lands; I will bring them back to their own country and pasture them upon the mountains of Israel [in the land's ravines and all its inhabited places]. 14 In good pastures will I pasture them, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be shall be their grazing ground. There they shall lie down on good grazing ground, and in rich pastures shall they be pastured on the mountains of Israel. 15 I myself will pasture my sheep; I myself will give them rest, says the Lord GOD. 16 The lost I will seek out, the strayed I will bring back, the injured I will bind up, the sick I will heal

God will reverse the evil done by bad human shepherds.

(but the sleek and the strong I will destroy), shepherding them rightly.

Those who would lead the others astray by setting bad example or rebellion. God is a good provider, defender of justice and upholder of the weak.

## 2nd Reading – Romans 5:5b-11

Saint Peter may have come to Rome by A.D. 42, but by the time Saint Paul wrote this letter from Corinth around A.D. 58, there was a flourishing Christian community in the city. Saint Paul planned to evangelize Spain (Romans 15:24) and to visit the Christian community at Rome en route. Since he was unknown to most of the Christians of Rome, he wrote this letter by way of introducing himself to them. Paul's background is Hebrew (family covenant) vice the Roman court where many interpreters try to place him. It is from the perspective of family covenant that he writes.

**5b The love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us.**

As children of God, we have an inheritance, the kingdom of God.

**6 For Christ, while we were still helpless,**

This is the status of the unjustified man. Heaven is closed and man is incapable of doing anything which will attain forgiveness of sin.

**yet died at the appointed time for the ungodly,**

Paul affirms this historical event in the theological context of man's helplessness and the effect of the event.

**7 Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die.**

From the logical point of view, this self-sacrifice would not take place, although it is possible that for a really good man it might be done.

**8 But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.**

This brings out the truly gratuitous character of Jesus' sacrifice - He died for all, including the Godless, those who were not really good.

**9 How much more then, since we are now justified by his blood,**

Justification by Christ's blood can be best understood when a contemporary rabbinical axiom is recalled: "There is no expiation of sins without blood" (Hebrews 9:22). The axiom itself is based on Old Testament purification rites (Leviticus 8:15; 9:15-21; 16:19; 19:24; etc.). This idea was not that the blood so shed in sacrifice appeased Yahweh, nor was the emphasis on the shedding of the blood and the ensuing death a sort of recompense or price to be paid. Rather, the blood was shed either to purify and cleanse ritually, objects dedicated to Yahweh's service (Leviticus 16:15-19) or else to consecrate objects and persons to that service. On the Day of Atonement the high priest put blood on the ark of the covenant "because of the uncleanness of the Israelites and their transgressions in all their sins" (Leviticus 16:16). The sins were considered to have defiled the land, the Temple, and all it contained. The sprinkling with blood purified and consecrated anew, expiating the sins. The underlying reason is found in Leviticus 17:11: "the life of the flesh is in the blood; I have put it for you upon the altar to make

atonement of your lives; for it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life." Blood was identified with life itself because the *nepeš* (breath of life) was thought to be in it. When the blood ran out of a man, the *nepeš* left him. The blood that was shed in sacrifice was not, then, a vicarious punishment meted out on an animal instead of on the person who sacrificed it. Rather, the "life" of the animal was consecrated to Yahweh (Leviticus 16:8-9); it was a symbolic dedication of the life of the person who sacrificed it to Yahweh; it cleansed him of his faults in Yahweh's eyes and reconciled him once more. Christ's blood, shed in expiation of man's sins, was a willing offering of His life to bring about the reconciliation of man with God (Ephesians 2:13). Heaven was opened so that we may approach God individually and have our sins forgiven. Through baptism we can become God's children; we are no longer considered just His slaves without a right to inheritance,

**will we be saved through him from the wrath.**

Not past tense, but future sense. Salvation is the end point of the journey. We will be with God in heaven. Not stated here but inherent to this process is our free response to God's call in living the Christian life.

**10 Indeed, if, while we were enemies,**

This is a repetition of verse 8 in a more positive way; the sinner is not just "weak" or "ungodly", but actually an enemy of God. But the death of Christ brings about the reconciliation of an enemy with God. Reconciliation is the restoration of estranged and sinful man to union and companionship with God.

**we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved by his life.**

An effect of justification is a share in the risen life of Christ, which brings salvation. Although justification is something that happens now, salvation is still to be realized.

**11 Not only that, but we also boast of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.**

The effect of justification is that the Christian can even boast of God Himself, whereas before he stood in fear of His wrath. Having experienced God's love in the death of Christ, he can now exult at the very thought of God.

### Gospel – Luke 15:3-7

Our gospel reading today is one of three parables in Luke's gospel in which Luke champions the theme that God's mercy breaks through all human restrictions of how God should act toward sinners. God's mercy, indeed, is as foolish as a shepherd who abandon 99 sheep to save one. Because the disciples have such a merciful God, they can embark trustingly and joyfully on Jesus' way to this God.

**3 Jesus addressed this parable to the Pharisees and scribes; 4 "What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it? 5 And when he does find it, he sets it on his shoulders**

A lost sheep will lie down helplessly and refuse to budge. The shepherd is forced to carry it over a long distance; this can be done only by putting it on his shoulders. He clutches the forelegs with one hand firmly against his breast.

**with great joy**

Matthew 18:12-14 also gives the parable of the lost sheep. Matthew emphasizes seeking. Luke the joy of finding.

**6 and, upon his arrival home, he calls together his friends and neighbors**

This invitation to friends and neighbors is exclusive to Luke.

**and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' 7 I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance.**

Jesus is the absolute Son of the absolute Father. Jesus is the exclusive revelation of the Father. This is a direct contradiction of the Jewish claim to have complete revelation of God in the Law and the Prophets.