

Notes on Canon Montjean's Faith Talk: The Sacred Heart in the Liturgy – Part II

*Definition **Liturgy**: In its original meaning, a 'public work' or service done in the name of or on behalf of the people.*

We naturally use the word 'heart' to express a predominant aspect of personality. For instance, a generous person is referred to as 'big hearted' and a courageous person as 'brave hearted' but as St. Francis de Sales said, only God is able to see the 'heart' in its entirety.

Within the Sacred Heart the Church sees the mystery of the hypostatic union of Christ's Divine and Human nature. Out of love for us, Jesus became incarnate, assuming on our human nature in order to redeem it so that "we may be made partakers of His divine nature" (*Offertory*). The 'Sacred Heart' therefore expresses the perfect personal love of the Blessed Trinity for us. The Sacred Heart of Jesus redeems us and so performs the perfect liturgical action. The Sacred Heart does this uniquely and without the need of an intermediary (St. Thomas Aquinas compares this joint action to that which occurs at Mass 'disjoint' as priest is necessary to offer the liturgy).

The general modes of action of the Sacred Heart are Purification and Sanctification and they are symbolized either directly or implicitly in the liturgy by blood and water. For instance, in the Sacrament of Baptism water is clearly seen to symbolize purification from sin. The Symbolism of being submerged in water is dying to sin and rising to a new supernatural life. Within the Mass at the offertory, water is added to wine. The water symbolizing purification of the humankind and the wine will become the blood of sacrifice. When the Sacred Heart was pierced at the crucifixion we are told by St John, 'blood and water' flowed. We may reasonably think that the water may have issued initially but St John mentions blood first. The blood represents Jesus' sacrifice which is a precondition to purification. Before Mass we receive the sprinkling of Holy Water to purify us but this has only been made possible by Jesus' sacrifice.

How the Sacred Heart is manifested in the Scripture reading:

- The readings show how all the prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.
- By 'essence', the readings are the word of God and therefore irrespective of understanding will open a window of grace.
- The Word of God is read for the living and the dead and is therefore a consolation for the suffering souls in purgatory.

The Sacredness of the liturgy is shown by:

- the use of the sacred language,
- sacred Vestments and
- the orientation of the liturgical action. (e.g. facing 'liturgical east' symbolizing waiting for the second coming of Christ).