



The Order of the Sacred and Immaculate Hearts of Jesus and Mary

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Advent 2012

Dear Friends of the Two Hearts,

As we now prepare to celebrate anew our Lord's birth to us this Christmas, we present to you this edition of *In the Two Hearts*. The newsletter begins with a reflection intended to help re-focus our attention on the true meaning of Christmas. Then, in continuation of our vocation series, Br. James shares his journey and particular experience in hearing our Lord's invitation to serve Him as a religious. The final article is from a prison inmate – who corresponds regularly with a member of the Order – sharing his struggle to grow, each new day, in union with our Lord.

It has become a tradition for us as members of the Order of the Sacred and Immaculate Hearts of Jesus and Mary to have a communal theme for each year from August 19th (our Foundation Day) until the next August 19th. This year our theme is "A New Beginning." Already in these past few months, we have had many new beginnings. After over a year of waiting, we received with joy a new Bishop for our Diocese of Steubenville: Bishop Jeffrey Monforton. We also have the pleasure of announcing to you the new beginning of a completely renewed website for the Order (which can be seen online at: www.heartsofJesusandMary.com).

May this Advent and Christmas season, during this grace-filled Year of Faith, be a time of new beginnings and new blessings for you and your loved ones. May you come to know the truth of our Lord's words spoken to us through the prophet Isaiah: "Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"

In the Two Hearts,

Fr. Francis

Fr. Francis of the Redeemer, OSIHJM



In the Two Hearts

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Where Your Treasure Is, There Also Will Your Heart Be

By Sr. Maria, Servant of Abba Father

What is your treasure? Where is your heart? What is the first thing that comes to your mind as you ponder this question?

Where is God's heart? Christmas demonstrates profoundly that mankind is God's treasure. He lived out the reality, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be." He preferred us to heaven.

Our Lord once said regarding treasures, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth." It is interesting how, of all things, the world uses materialism to compete against the attention on Jesus for Christmas day. There are few things more contrary to the historical account, spiritual significance,



and what it is God wanted to convey with Christmas than an emphasis on material things, purchasing, and abundance. Several times during His life, Jesus even indicated the need to choose between having wealth and having Him.

To the degree a soul is empty is the degree with which it can be filled with God. Material or emotional possessions (or the wanting of them) tend to clutter our hearts and make them restless. "It is abundantly clear that the human heart is more intensely attracted to one object, in proportion as it is withdrawn from a multiplicity of desires. Therefore, the more a man is freed from solicitude concerning temporal matters, the more perfectly he will be empowered to love God." (De perf. Spirit. Vitae., Ch.6)

Christian poverty though, does not primarily relate to material things. Recently I came across a description of attachment that said, "Attachment indicates a situation in which we have accepted excessively the attraction of some created good—a thing, pleasure, person or experience—to the extent that our freedom has become enslaved to it to some degree. We are not as able as before to say "no" as easily as "yes." The possession now controls us, not we the possession.

John Paul II reminds us that Jesus, 'affirms for everyone the need to make a basic decision regarding earthly goods: to be freed of their tyranny. No one, He says, can serve two masters.' (L'osservatore Romano 12-7-1994, p. 11 #5)" (Christian Totality, Basil Cole, OP and Paul Conner, OP; p. 145)

I remember the narrow understanding and application of poverty that I had when I first entered religious life. I thought of it in terms of not having quality or quantity of possessions, and failed to perceive that our greatest human wealth is not material—it is our immaterial "riches" we grasp onto much more strongly. During formation, it was emphasized that poverty must foremost be a disposition of the heart; "Blessed are the poor in spirit" points not simply to a poverty of fact, or in trying to spend little to save money, or to an exterior lifestyle without the spirit that was meant to accompany it. We were taught that spiritually there was no value in being poor when it came to objects while being possessive of our friends, clinging on to our opinions and preferences, being internally greedy for admiration and adulation, being willful, or making use of our gifts to our own advantage. The practice of not having an abundance of possessions is not an end in itself. Rather, it is a necessary practice for obtaining and maintaining that true, interior poverty—that poverty through which God becomes our treasure. And where our treasure is, there will our hearts also be.

"By His life and words Jesus changed the meaning of the blessings God promises from those of earth predominantly to those of heaven. He revealed that the materially poor are blessed if they are humble before God and depend upon His care with unshakable trust. This spirit of poverty is hard for the rich to develop, since wealth tempts to independence of God and to selfishness toward neighbor . . . He also offers advice to any interested followers for avoiding the dangers of possessions and for coming more easily to prefer God's Kingdom to that of this world." (Christian Totality, Basil Cole, OP and Paul Connor, OP; p 118)

Letting Go and Letting God

By Br. James of the Holy Spirit

I was 14 when I first realized I had a vocation. The thought had silently been present in my mind and heart for some time, but I never went there. It was too challenging of a thing for me. Then one day the thought came strongly and I remember the experience so well. I was in my room one day thinking about spiritual things when the thought of giving myself totally to God came to me again, this time accompanied by an inner conviction that seemed loud and clear: He was asking this of me. I wriggled, I squirmed, I even remember laying on the floor and propping myself upside down with my legs on my bed in protest against this terrible idea and—more than that—the realization within myself that, this is what I was supposed to do. But I didn't want to! I wanted to get married, have kids, have lots of nice things, do what I wanted to do . . . I even went half way with Him and said, "I'll be a preacher and devote myself to you fully that way" but anything but this!



As my anxiety grew and grew I realized that I really only had one option if I wanted to fully follow our Jesus, and that was to say, "Yes" in an act of trust and relinquishment. As I let those words pass from my heart to my lips a deep peace came over my soul and I somehow knew that this peace was the sign for me that I was not mistaken here, and that our Lord was confirming my obedience and love. As the days went on what seemed so repulsive to me started to shift into something beautiful and I became quite excited about the idea of giving my all to Him without reserve. Not long afterward He granted me an unexpected grace: I found a pamphlet of The Order of the Sacred and Immaculate Hearts of Jesus and Mary in a local Church. As soon as I read it this sense of "this is right, this is for me" flooded my heart and I soon got in touch with the Community that I would later enter into as a permanent brother.

"Grant, we pray, almighty God, that, as we are bathed in the new radiance of Your Incarnate Word, the light of faith, which illumines our minds, may also shine through our deeds. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever."

— Collect, from the
Christmas Mass at Dawn

Since that initial time there have been many peaks and valleys in my relationship with our Lord, but I share this basic experience – of hearing His still soft voice, then protesting and rebelling against it, only to realize I need to relinquish myself again to experience a deep peace – as a glimpse into the path that our Lord has carried me on. This experience has been repeated in my life innumerable times and in many different ways since that initial prompting. In a real way it has become a basic, daily experience of mine, teaching me how to daily discern His voice over mine and offering me many opportunities to relinquish my will to His.





As we strive to progress in the love of God and neighbor in the day to day events and circumstances of our lives, the example of others can be a source of encouragement and inspiration. The following is an excerpt from a letter written by an inmate who writes to one of our members, sharing the example of his Christian witness among his fellow inmates.

"Dear most kind friend,

Grace, blessings and all God's love be with you. I pray all is going well with you and all the other brothers and sisters there with you. I just recently got your letter and package of booklets and cards. Thank you so much . . . we have some new people doing the package mail so there has been some delay. I think our dear Lord and Lady might have been saving it for just this time that I'm going through these struggles. Some of the struggles I'm going through right now is with my cellmate and the guys that moved next door. They are unbelievers and worldly. They speak foul and perverse things and even make jabs at our Faith. I am forced to sit with them when I go to eat. I try to follow Jesus and be as loving and charitable as I can. I believe in the words of our Lord, "Be holy for I am holy." I try to watch whatever I say and do. I want to become a holy Saint, pleasing and useful to our Lord and Lady. I pray for those around me and share what little food and other things I can. I find myself not going to some of the meals, mostly dinner, on certain nights just so I don't have to be in company with perverse and blasphemous talk. I struggled at first, not going and giving my food to them. But I already share my food, at least some part of it at some point each day.

I try to follow scripture, "Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil by doing good." I try to be kind and change the subject when they are talking in a foul perverse manner. But they try to get me to engage in their perverse conversations so I have concluded, I avoid these situations when I can. Please pray that I may find a good meek and humble Catholic cellmate. I feel so alone at times dear friend. I feel I just don't relate to anyone. My whole focus is on God and our dear Faith. But so many are so lukewarm in the faith. I see Catholics going to church and receiving our dear Lord and then right after speaking filth from their mouths and showing pictures of naked girls to others. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." I just pray as I go about the yard the prayer given to the 3 children at Fatima by our Lady in 1917, "My God I believe, I adore, I hope and I love Thee. I ask pardon for all those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope and do not love Thee." I also pray the rosary and chaplet of Divine Mercy at times on the yard. I pray these prayers everyday in my cell.

God bless you. Your friendship is truly a blessing. Thank you so much for all you do for me and for others. Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His love and mercy."

-Martin

Good news! We have finally completed our new website! You can visit it by going to
www.heartsofjesusandmary.com

May the Hearts
of Jesus and Mary
fill you with Their
love and peace this
Christmas day



Infant Eyes

By a Member of the Order

*Beautiful child, born of a Maiden star,
That cold night amid your infant cries,
Your mother pressed you to her heart,
And first beheld your soft blue eyes.*

*A baby, helpless yet almighty God,
With trusting love in her arms, just lies,
So my soul longs to embrace and absorb
The humble love of God's human eyes.*

*Into the window of Divine soul,
Gaze with wonder, and realize,
Every soul is offered salvation,
Seen within their Redeemer's eyes.*

*So come unto Him and His mother,
Those full of anxiety who agonize,
Be filled with peace all surpassing,
Bestowed by little, gentle blue eyes.*

*Look upon Him, all you weak,
With faint heart, or soul that denies,
Relight the fire of strength, of faith,
Enkindled by these bright eyes.*

*Come to see, all who are learned,
You who desire and long to be wise,
Come to the cradle of All-Knowing,
Fathom the mysteries of His deep eyes.*

*Draw near, orphan child and widow,
All unwanted, all whom others despise,
Feel the tender love and compassion,
That radiates from your Maker's eyes.*

*Here is all the splendor and majesty,
Seekers of beauty, who delight in sunrise,
More glorious than stars, awe of angels
The loveliness of His sapphire eyes.*