

The Sacred Heart **A Reflection by Noel Davis**

Love is the Heart of God
the Heart of Jesus
the heart of you and me
All that is of love
is of You, O God.

'Tis love that takes us beyond ourselves
to the world of each other
across our fears
touches our unbelieving
softens our unforgiving
heals our wounding.

O why is it we resist You so?

The Life of Jesus reveals the Heart of God

The Heart of God is revealed in flesh and blood and in such an uncompromising way. Jesus lived his short life to the full, white hot, a powerful statement on what it means to be human. The Jewish author, Maurice Friedman, wrote a book entitled 'The Hidden Human Image' and looked to a modern day Job as an answer to his searching after trekking through literature, philosophy, the sacred texts and reflecting on his own life journey. We as Christians look to Jesus for what it means to be human, to be faithful to our own calling.

At the heart of the life of Jesus is his God of Love. His way of expressing his relationship to his God was Abba, the one he met with in prayer and in his encounters with the people and the world of his time. His message was clear and revolutionary and he preached it with passion, empowering others to do the same.

His love was all embracing, his compassion born of suffering. He lived his truth from Love's authority. His love was tender and merciful, the heart of his stories, parables, discourses. His was a fierce love that exposed hypocrisy, deceit, the counterfeit, called a spade a spade, named our sinful actions for what they were – the work of broods of vipers, whited sepulchres - confronting us to wake us up to ourselves and turn our lives around. Such frank talk from such a young man who spoke with such authority! Intolerable to the establishment but gave heart to those suffering under its oppressive rule, its injustices, its lack of loving, its too small imagining.

Our Images of the Sacred

Over the years our fertile religious imagination has understandably been very active in expressing our relationship to our Loving God. "O living flame of love, how tenderly you wound my soul in her profoundest core!" (John of the Cross) The images of Jesus and Mary, so human, with hearts revealed, radiant with light, Jesus' heart crowned with thorns, pierced and bleeding, Mary's grieving – these are powerful images of our spiritual and devotional heritage. Once again how do we express the reality that the heart sees and we experience at the heart of our own living? Like so many homes pictures of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary hung side by side above our mantle piece, our place consecrated to Jesus and Mary. At the turn of the

century Pope Leo XIII consecrated the world to the Sacred Heart and in 1942 Pope Pius XII consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. As little children we sang with great gusto at Mass, Benediction. first Friday novenas –

To Jesus heart all burning
With fervent love for men
My heart with fondest yearning
Shall raise its joyful strains.
While ages course along
Blessed be with loudest song
The Sacred Heart of Jesus
By every heart and tongue
The Sacred Heart of Jesus
By every heart and tongue.

O heart for me on fire
With love

Love is at the heart of all our images of Jesus and the God he reveals – Jesus as Good Shepherd, Friend of the poor and forsaken, the Loving Father of the prodigal son, the Heart of the Beatitudes, the Healer of the sick, the deformed, the oppressed, the possessed, the Crucified One who lived his truth, the Lover loving us into life, the Emmaus Jesus, the Reconciler who showed us love not fear brings lasting peace.

Our World Right Now – “They are like sheep without a shepherd”

His heart went out to the lost of his world. How he saw they needed guidance and reassurance, someone to listen to their stories, bring them hope, love them, reconnect them to their Source, empower them to see, to choose, to find and follow another way. It takes little insight to see and acknowledge our own predicament, see how lost we are in our hatred and divisiveness, the terror, the paybacks, the rejection, the abuse, the cover ups, the loss of respect, our fear that throws up walls and razor wire, our greed consuming us, the loneliness of our non relating, the epidemic of depression, the despair of isolation, the cleansing. “They are like sheep without a shepherd . . .one who knows them each by name . . . calls to them . . . leaves the ninety nine in the desert to find the one lost. That is the God Jesus reveals, calls us into loving relationship, reveals we too have that courage of love, inspires us through his Spirit to love, to forgive, to work for justice, to believe all that is of love is of God.

.Yes ‘where there is charity and love there the God of Love abides’. . . alive and active too in the mess and evil. Really so overwhelming and unbelievable in the face of so much fear, depravity, crucifixion, injustice. Believe the unbelievable is the good news story of Jesus. The light of love is more resilient than evil no matter how dark the darkness be for love’s truth is so deeply embedded in our hearts. What an experience it is to be in the presence of another, in the light of her/hisr love and the absence of fear.

To Believe in Jesus. To Believe in His Stories of God

What story or parable from scripture or your own life encounters speaks to you of love in your own journey right now? It might be good to spend a little time with it to honour the feast, to let it not pass you by without a pause and allow yourself to be opened to its empowering of you along your way to-day. You might be moved to

mark the day in some special way on your own or with your family or at school or in the community. It may be a little meaningful ritual.

I pause a while to be with the woman accused, about to be stoned and her encounter with Jesus. There is no judgment and condemnation. There is acknowledgment of the truth. Jesus reveals to her her own goodness and beauty. There is mutual respect and love. She experiences the joy of being forgiven, of being seen very differently in love. She forgives herself for her abuse of others and those who have abused her. Her capacity to love is restored. Jesus too is moved by her beauty, her gratitude, her tears, the joy he sees back in her eyes. I pray for the grace to believe that is true of me.

When we experience with all our heart
That someone believes in us
Our heart grows wings
And we dare to spread to our full self
And take off into the beckoning unknown
Strong, open, confident
Daring to say 'Yes!' to any challenge
That dares to show itself!

Images That Speak to us of Love

Whatever the images that best speak to us of love, relate to our own story, touch our hearts, the Heart of each is the God of Love, revealed to us in the life of Jesus and in the lives of all who take us beyond ourselves and reveal to us the Love we bear.

There is a place within our hearts
close us our seeing
where meditation and life merge
and what tears us apart
is reconciled –
Heart of Jesus
Heart of God
Presence at the heart of you and me.

It is through the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of God opening the eyes of our hearts that we are awakened to the overwhelming reality it is love that makes our every action a prayer, one with the Eternal Prayer of the Divine being expressed in the whole of creation unfolding. Quite staggering to realise our place, our joy, the womb of our being and source of our existing is the Heart of God, revealed the moment the light of our love breaks through and we choose love's way.

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