



Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network 

Devotion to the Heart of Jesus throughout history

The Messenger of the Sacred-Heart of Jesus celebrates 160 years

Devotion to the Heart of Jesus has a long history. From the “pierced heart of Jesus” in the Gospel of St. John—interpreted in medieval mysticism as a wound that manifests the deepness of His love—to the revelations experienced by St. Margaret Mary Alacoque in the 17th century as well as from later devotion to the Sacred Heart in the 19th century, with the dynamic inscribed by the Apostleship of Prayer, to the Divine Mercy devotion inspired by Saint Faustina Kowalska at the beginning of the 20th century. Three Encyclicals have been written on the subject of the Sacred Heart, the most recent by Pope Pius XII in 1956: *Haurietusaquas*. **Over the centuries, there have been various inculturations of this devotion**, with various forms and terminology, but always as a means for the Father to reveal the mystery of His Love to us in all its depth, through a privileged symbol: the living heart of His Risen Son. After all, “the Heart of Christ is the center of mercy,” as Pope Francis points out.

In 2020 we celebrate the centenary of Margaret Mary Alacoque, canonized by Pope Benedict XV on 13 May 1920. It was with the help of Fr. Claude La Colombière, a Jesuit, that she made known the message that the Risen Lord had revealed to her regarding the depth of His mercy. In 1688, six years after La Colombière’s death, Sister Margaret had a final vision in which, through Mary, the Lord entrusted to the Sisters of the Visitation and to the priests of the Company of Jesus the task of transmitting to the world the experience and understanding of the Sacred Heart. Two hundred years later, the Company of Jesus officially accepted this “most agreeable task” (*munus suavissimum*) at the 23rd General Congregation (1883, decree 46) and then entrusted the mission to the Apostleship of Prayer at the 26th General Congregation (1915, decree 21). Encourage

In 1861, Father Henri Ramière SJ, the Apostleship of Prayer director, began publishing the “Messenger of the Heart of Jesus”, inspiring a network of more than 13 million members. This Apostolate, founded by the Jesuits and now known as the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, is rooted in the Heart of Jesus, in spirit of apostolic availability. In 2009, Fr. Adolfo Nicolás SJ launched the process of recreation of this ecclesial service, which led to a deepening of the spiritual tradition of the Apostleship of Prayer and an updating of devotion to the Heart of Jesus for today. **The Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, now a pontifical work, has developed a manner of entering into the dynamic of the Heart of Jesus called “The Way of the Heart”**. As Pope Francis declared, on the occasion of the network’s 175th birthday, the Sacred Heart is the foundation of the PWPN mission, a mission of compassion for the world.

In June 2019, while celebrating the 175 years of the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, the Holy Father stated: "On this day of the solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, it is good to remember the **foundations of our mission**, as did Bettina (Argentina). It is **a mission of compassion for the world. We can explain it as a "way of the heart", meaning a prayerful itinerary that transforms people's lives.** The Heart of Christ is so immense that it wishes to involve us all in **a revolution of tenderness.** Being close to the Heart of the Lord urges our own heart to approach our brothers and sisters with love, and helps us join this compassion for the world. We are called to be **witnesses and messengers of God's mercy**, to offer the world light where there is darkness, hope where despair reigns, salvation where sin abounds. **To pray is to enter with my heart into the Heart of Jesus.** In this way, I journey into His heart, to feel what He feels and experience His compassion. I also journey into my own heart to change it within this relationship with the Heart of Jesus".

"The disciple whom Jesus most loved, the one who best knew the Heart of Jesus, who lay his head on his breast (Jn 13:23), was also the first to recognize the Risen Jesus on the shores of the Sea of Galilee (Jn 21:7). The closer we are to the Heart of Jesus, the more we perceive His joys and how He suffers for the men, women and children of this world; and we recognize that He is present today as He was in the past, working in the world. The closer we are to the Heart of Jesus, the less indifferent we are to those around us, desiring to commit ourselves with Jesus in this world, at the service of His mission of compassion."

The Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network officially launched their formation platform, The Way of the Heart, on 9 May 2020. This is the treasure of the Apostleship of Prayer presented in such a form that all people can benefit from it. This is the key to interpreting our mission, the compass of the process of recreation begun in 2009.

We will remember the prayer intention of the Pope in June 2020 in the Pope Video:

«Many people suffer due to the great difficulties they endure. We can help them by accompanying them on an itinerary filled with compassion which transforms people's lives. This brings them closer to the Heart of Christ, which welcomes all of us into the revolution of tenderness. We pray that all those who suffer may find their way in life, allowing themselves to be touched by the Heart of Jesus.»

Fr. Pedro Arrupe S.J. saw the essence of the devotion to the Heart of Jesus in the union of love with God and neighbor, and that is what he wanted to live: "Our way of acting is your way of acting."

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