

# GAZING ON JESUS FROM A PIERCED HEART

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## ***I. A Christology from the heart.***

We are witnessing a moment of renewed interest in the spirituality of the Heart of Jesus after a period of relative silence. This theological renewal has occurred thanks to a greater understanding of the biblical meaning of the heart. We understand it today as the symbol of the totality of a person, not as a part of him, with emphasis on its interiority. Both the Hebrew word "leb" (OT) and the Greek word "Kardia" (NT) which we use to indicate the heart are understood as the unifying centre of the human being, his spiritual and corporal lives in unity, without dissociation.

Today reflection concerning the Heart of Jesus is clearly focused towards Jesus and his love rather than towards a physical part of his body (a fact which was important in the past). His Heart attracts us because his true human nature attracts us, as *Gaudium et Spes* 22 beautifully states: "He worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will and with a human heart he loved". This is why today the expression "Heart of Jesus" seems preferable to that of "Sacred Heart". This is why the representation of the Heart alone, isolated from Jesus' body, seems inadvisable.

What does focusing one's gaze on Jesus through building up a "Christology from the heart" mean? How many kinds of Christologies are there? Without being experts on the theme we can say that there are various options for presenting Jesus from different points of view or hermeneutical keys. Studying Jesus based on the experience of the ancient Desert Fathers will show aspects of Jesus different from those which issue from the Carmelite tradition, while Jesus' characteristics which stem from an oriental theology will be different from those of the Jesus of the Theology of Liberation. Each one of these perspectives enriches the vision of the Christology as a whole.

In our case, we have our own key of interpretation. We want to gaze at Jesus from the heart. From his Heart or from our hearts? Undoubtedly from both. We want to do a theology with the heart, involving not only our intellect but also our personal and affective relationship with the person whom we wish to love above all. And at the same time we want to look inside his own Heart, insofar as we can, to look on to the mystery of God's mercy and tenderness which is opened to us in him. Our theology will be one of adoration, of the personal experience of feeling loved, of amazement and emotion in front of God's love which Jesus' human heart brings close to us. Our theology will necessarily be a spiritual one. This means that this reflection has to do with my life, my prayer, my choices and deepest feelings. We need more than an intellectual understanding – we need an understanding which involves my every intention, action and operation, my affections and my personal love for the Lord.

This is the introduction and plan of the challenge. Not an easy one, since our personal conversion is not easy. How can we develop this theology with this particular angle on Jesus? We want to gaze on Jesus with our hearts, and we want to gaze on Jesus' Heart (remember the Little Prince, in Saint Exupéry's story: "one can only see well with the heart, the essential is invisible to the eyes").

Father Arrupe's words orient us: "One cannot find a word in the NT which comes more rapidly and accurately, with greater depth and human warmth, close to a definition of Christ than the word "heart". (...) No other expression suggests better "the breadth and the length, the height and the depth of the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge" (Ep 3:18)<sup>1</sup>.

Bruno Ramazzotti<sup>2</sup> suggests that the renewal of the spirituality of the Heart of Jesus must follow three directions: 1) stressing the centrality of Jesus in popular piety and in the liturgy, 2) turning to the rich biblical and patristic sources and the symbolism of the Heart, 3) emphasizing the primacy of the mercy and love the Heart of Jesus reveals to us. And let me add that to renew the practice of this devotion and transform it into a spirituality we must always understand it in relation to the Eucharist. I will try to explain something of all this in this article, contemplating biblical scenes which are our doorway to the Heart of Jesus. We will then be guided by the testimonies of some saints, attempting to learn from their experience of Jesus. We want to steep in a Christology of the heart capable of carrying away our hearts.

## ***II. Biblical contemplation of Jesus in his earthly ministry***

### *a) The Heart of a Son*

We not only want to assert the theological truth of Jesus' divine filiation to which many New Testament texts bear witness (as, for example, Saint John's gospel written "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" – Jn 20:31), but are also interested in emphasizing that Jesus had "the Heart of a Son". Jesus knew and felt that he was "Son", he lived a tender relationship of love with his Father whom he called "Abba".

The divine relationship with his Father filled his human Heart, it was his secret, his joy, a permanent awareness, a basic attitude which determined his behaviour<sup>3</sup>.

In the NT we find that Jesus used the word "Father" 170 times to refer to God. He always used this name and also, as has been suggested, normally used the word "Abba", as testified in Mk 14:36, on Gethsemani. This is endorsed in Ga 4:6 and Rm 8:15. The grammatical form of "Father" in Lk 11:2, where Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, seems to reflect the original Aramaic "Abba". This indicates that the disciples too are called to live this degree of intimate and familiar relationship with God, even though Jesus' relationship with his Father is clearly unique and distinct from that of the disciples. Jesus speaks of "my Father" and "your Father". Mt 11:27 is impressive: "No one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him". A unique relationship, which received all its authority from his Father.

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<sup>1</sup> *En El solo la Esperanza*, Ed. Mensajero, Bilbao, 1986, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup> *The Spirituality of the Pierced Heart of Jesus*, Saint Paul Publications – Africa, 1992, p. 19

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Biblical Spirituality of the Heart*, J. G. Bovenmars, Alba House, New York, 1991, p. 78

His closeness to God surprised and even scandalized: "But that made the Jews even more intent on killing him, because, not content with breaking the Sabbath, he spoke of God as his own Father, and so made himself God's equal" (Jn 5:18).

The self-awareness of this existential experience of feeling that he is the Son was certainly very clear in how Jesus felt on the day of his baptism in the Jordan (Mk 1:9-11). On that day, inundated by the Spirit, he heard his Father's voice saying: "You are my Son, the Beloved, my favour rests on you". Jesus probably came to the river Jordan like a devout and anonymous Jew prepared to accomplish his religious duty, without quite knowing what was going to happen. We cannot know precisely what he felt in his heart at that moment, but the subsequent events indicate that it seems to have been a basic experience of his vocation. We can suppose that he felt his Father's love communicated through his Spirit as never before, and understood fully the significance of being his Son (Paul tells us that it is the Spirit that makes us exclaim "Abba, Father", Rm 8:15). We can also suppose that after emerging from the water he understood everything in a different way. Indeed we know that his life changed completely from that day on. He did not return to Nazareth, and, in the days that followed, started his ministry for the Kingdom of God. He stopped being an unknown artisan from the north of the country to become an itinerant prophet who announced to his brothers and sisters what for him was an intense personal experience, i.e. that they too were his Father's beloved sons and daughters.

Much later, at another crucial moment in his life before he set out towards his passion, his needy Heart turned to feel the consolation and strength of his Father's voice on the mountain of the Transfiguration (Mt 17:5).

#### *b) An obedient Heart*

We can clearly recognize his Son's Heart in his attitude of obedience to his Father. We do not only see acts of obedience but a basic attitude, a dimension of his Heart, the permanent offering of self.

He lived to do his Father's will, it was his passion, his mission, his nourishment (Jn 4:34). He always did what pleased the Father (Jn 8:29). With the obedience of a servant, of an envoy, but above all of a Son, he accomplished the Father's works, he spoke the Father's words, he lived looking towards the Father, "pros ton Theon" (Jn 1:1).

#### *c) A Eucharistic Heart*

His Son's Heart, his docility to the Father's will, is the new form of sacrifice agreeable to God, the spiritual sacrifice which consists in offering oneself in obedience. This is the new priesthood which consists in the gift of self. Psalm 40 reflects this well when it says that God is not gratified in sacrifices or cereal offering but in the heart's answer: "Here I am, my God, to obey your will" (7-8). The Letter to the Hebrews comments on this, saying that Jesus Christ "carried out God's will in offering his own body in sacrifice once and forever" (Heb 10:5-10).

This priesthood and life style reaches its culminating expression in the Last Supper,

when Jesus opened and in a way surrendered his Heart to his disciples (i.e. the totality of his life). That night, Jesus put into words and gestures what had always burned within him, i.e. his love given out to the Father and to us. He made the bread and wine the sign (the sacrament) of what he had always lived, summing up his entire life in it: I am this bread, I tell you, I am this wine, surrendered, shed for you. The Eucharistic bread and wine became the reflection of his Heart. Jesus had always been surrendered bread, he always been wine offered to all. With these gestures he also showed his acceptance, for love of us, of the cruel death which was approaching him, an unjust and undesired death, but which served to show the greatest love.

In saying to them "Do this in memory of me" he invited the disciples to associate themselves with his life surrendered for love of his brothers, to do the same themselves. Not only did he invite them to celebrate the Eucharist in his memory, but above all to give their lives (to give their hearts). This is the sense of John's Gospel when, in the context of the Last Supper, he tells of the washing of the feet, for it expresses the same Eucharistic logic of giving one's life in the service of one's brothers and sisters. To be a disciple is to have the same Heart as Jesus, i.e. the same way of living giving oneself out for love of others.

In this attitude of *life given out* we can recognize the most characteristic and permanent aspect of Jesus' heart. It is what we could call Jesus' Eucharistic Heart. It is this attitude of his Heart that we would like to make ours when we ask him "Make our hearts like unto yours", or when each morning we offer our lives to the Father.

And now let us consider other attitudes we recognize in Jesus' Heart, all of which spring from what we recognize as the fundamental and principal one.

#### *d) A compassionate Heart*

To describe the inner turmoil Jesus felt in front of situations of human poverty, the synoptic gospels occasionally use an uncommon word, *splanchnízomai*, which is normally translated as *feeling compassion, feeling sympathy with or for someone*<sup>4</sup>.

The noun *splanchnon* in its plural form (*splanchna*) means in the first place *inner parts, core*<sup>5</sup> (cf. Ac 1:18). It also means, in a figurative sense, the seat of the emotions, the *heart*. In biblical literature it can also indicate the seat and source of love, affection, one's own feeling of love and affection (as in Ph 1:8), mercy and other nuances. In its singular form, it indicates in a figurative sense *mercy, love*.

This word appears only 12 times in the Synoptic gospels<sup>6</sup>, and every time the *receiving subjects* of this sentiment of compassion are the poor, the despised, the infirm, or the repenting sinner in Lk 15:20. Mt 9:36 for example tells us that Jesus felt compassion for the crowds who were harassed and dejected like sheep without a shepherd (Mt 20:34, the two blind men; Mk 1:41, a leper; Lk 7:13, the widow whose only son had died; etc.). We see in this

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<sup>4</sup> Walter BAUER, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1979, p. 762

<sup>5</sup> Walter BAUER, op. cit., p. 763

<sup>6</sup> NESTLE-ALAND Computer-Konkordanz zum Novum Testamentum Graece, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1980, p. 1718

expression a good key for understanding what stirred Jesus' Heart.

The term seems to be the realization of God's attribute which the OT indicated with the concept of *rahamin* (*rhm* in noun form) which is "the sentiment of *mercy*; originally, the seat of this sentiment (*core, interior*)"<sup>7</sup>. *RHM* transmits the idea of God's maternal "tenderness", for the term initially meant *maternal womb, bosom, the core*<sup>8</sup>, and, starting from this initial image, it translates into God's compassion and mercy.

Connecting the two terms suggests that the compassion of Jesus' Heart in front of human suffering stems from maternal love and that it stirs him inwardly to the point of causing him "physical" turmoil.

#### *e) A child's Heart*

We know Jesus' Heart when we bear in mind the good relationship he had with children. He surprised his contemporaries by becoming their friend and defending their dignity in a society which did not consider them. Undoubtedly Jesus was able to laugh and play with them, to become a child himself in order to dialogue with them, revealing his own child's Heart (Mk 10:14-16). But it is above all his personal identification with the poor and dispossessed (Mt 25) what best explains his desire to be close to the children, they too being poor and dispossessed. Jesus leads the disciples to an attitude of evangelical detachment teaching them to identify their lives with the children and all those deprived of their rights. By being poor with the poor, they gain the inner freedom that Jesus himself lived. In his love and preference for the children, Jesus invites us to the same spiritual freedom we find as a proposal in Matthew's beatitudes and elsewhere. In fact, Mathew's version of the beatitudes can be read as a splendid portrait of Jesus' own heart.

#### *f) A free, brave and merciful Heart (Jesus with the women)*

Jesus' meetings with a number of women of his time show a clearly different approach to the usual one of this male-oriented society. His dialogue with the Samaritan woman shows how his Heart knew how to place a person above the social prejudices of his time. He turned a person outcast by society for three reasons - because she was a woman, because she was a Samaritan, because she was a sinner - into a disciple and missionary.

Let us consider Jesus' meeting with the sinning woman in Simon's house (Lk 7:39-50). She clung to him, washed his feet with her tears, dried them with her hair. In this striking scene at least three very clear characteristics of Jesus' Heart come forth: his freedom, his courage, and his mercy. He showed supreme freedom in accepting this unusual homage from a woman known to be a sinner. He showed both freedom and courage in opposing the pharisaic mentality which proclaimed it a sacred duty to draw away from "sinners". He always denounced courageously pharisaic insincerity, its duplicity of heart which replaced love and justice with appearances. In fact this opposition drew on him odious enmities which in the end cost him his life. But above all here we see the mercy of God's Heart towards us: it opened to this woman who felt unworthy to be loved. Jesus' loving look and the words he

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<sup>7</sup> id. Col. 959

<sup>8</sup> Ernst JENNI, Claus WESTERMAN, Diccionario Teológico Manual del Antiguo Testamento, Madrid, Cristiandad, 1985, v.II, col. 957

addressed to her gave her dignity, did not judge her, forgave her, saw the love within her. It was God's operating presence which spoke to Samuel in the OT before anointing David as king: "God does not see as man sees, man looks at the appearances but God looks at the heart" (1S 16:7, words similar to those we quoted concerning the Little Prince).

*g) A poor and humble Heart*

I will rapidly comment on Mt 11:25-30 ("I am meek and humble in heart"). Jesus belongs to the tradition of God's poor, the anawim<sup>9</sup>. In the first part of the pericope, which is sapiential, Jesus shows himself as the one who knows the mysteries of the Kingdom revealed to the simple people, and as the only one who knows the Father. The last part of the text states that he, God's Wisdom, the only Son of the Father, identifies himself with the poor and feels at home with them. This is why he can invite the poor, the outcast and those who are burdened to come to him, because his Heart is humble, because he is one of them.

We are invited to make this biblical contemplation our own, in an attitude of adoration and wonder, so that we may look at Jesus not with our minds but with our hearts and intuitively know what he lives and feels in his own Heart.

**III. The biblical symbolism of the heart**

In our Christology from the heart there are obligatory reference texts which offer a clear view of the scenes of the previous section. Beyond the historical Jesus, the passages of this section reveal the theological symbolism of Jesus' Heart. They are well-known and commented texts which I will only mention briefly since they have been treated in-depth in many studies.

*a) John 7:37-38*

On the last day and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood there and cried out: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me! Let anyone who believes in me come and drink! As scripture says, "From his heart shall flow streams of living water." He was speaking of the Spirit which those who believed in him were to receive, for there was no Spirit as yet because Jesus had not yet been glorified".

In Jerusalem, on the feast of shelters, water was drawn from the well of Siloam and carried in procession with all the people to the temple. On the seventh day the water was poured onto the altar and onto the rock of mount Sion which appeared inside the temple. They asked for rain for the fields, in memory of when Moses struck the rock in the desert and water flowed from it, a gesture which Isaiah interpreted as a sign of messianic salvation (Is 12:3). Jesus stated in a loud voice that he is the source of living water, this time inviting not the weary but the thirsty to come to him. The symbolism of the water is used to indicate that the Spirit springs from within him, from his Heart. The NT tradition proclaims Jesus as the rock from which flow the waters (1Co 10:4; Jn 2:19) of which we drink when we believe in him. In the dialogue with the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:14) Jesus promised her that whoever drinks this

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<sup>9</sup> Here I follow J.G. Bovenmars, op. cit. pp. 91-96

living water will also see his own heart as a source which springs towards eternal life. Therefore the believer's heart too is transformed into source of the Spirit.

This text must be interpreted in connection with the scene of the Pierced Side of the Crucified One, where the water and blood are the symbols of the life which springs from within Jesus, who is already dead.

*b) Jn 19:34-37 – The pierced Heart of the Crucified One*

The figure of the Crucified One, lifted up from the ground with an open side, has its roots in the OT and it is as if it summed up the theology of Saint John's Gospel, as if it were the summary of the whole of Christianity<sup>10</sup>.

It becomes the best symbol for indicating the redeeming fertility of Christ's death. The symbolism is a Semite one: the wound is the sign of death (the sacrificed lamb), and the blood and water the sign of life and fertility. The pierced heart is the symbol of the paschal Lamb of the New Alliance.

The episode of the pierced Heart is the key to John's message<sup>11</sup>. It is a solemnly testified message, based on two prophecies. John takes it expressly as a salvific symbol since he refers to the serpent lifted up in the desert (Jn 3:14-15). The Crucified One is the true bronze serpent, and he invites contemplation of it saying "they will look on the one whom they pierced". The living water which springs from him produces faith in whoever receives it ("so that you too may believe"). It is at the same time the accomplishment of the tradition of the prophet Zechariah concerning the messianic gift of the living water and the gift of the Spirit (Zc 12:10 and 13:1).

*c) Jn 20:19-29 – The pierced Heart of the Risen One*

Perhaps we have noticed that the traditional images of the Sacred Heart of Jesus tend to represent the Risen One showing his wounds. This glorious Jesus, with his visible wounds as a sign of his love, is the object of the veneration in the spirituality of the Heart of Jesus. Even though he is already risen, his Heart and his hands continues to be pierced with love for me and for his Church. He continues to be human and continues loving us with a human heart.

The Encyclical *Haurietis Aquas* clearly states this:

*Since our Saviour rose up to heaven with his glorified body, and sat at the right side of God the Father, he has never ceased loving his spouse the Church, with the ardent love which beats in his Heart (40).*

*Even though it is no longer subject to the turmoil of this mortal life [this most Sacred Heart] still lives, beats and is united in an indissoluble way to the person of the Divine Word...(42).*

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<sup>10</sup> *En El solo la Esperanza*, Pedro Arrupe, p. 144

<sup>11</sup> According to Edouard Glotin, S.J., *Sign of Salvation*, Apostleship of Prayer, NY, 1989, pp. 14-15

We gaze on him with his open Heart in the scene of his appearance to the Eleven (Jn 20:19-29), dispelling the disciples' fear and spreading the eschatological gifts of peace, the Spirit and forgiveness. Thomas received the gift of faith contemplating his wounds and his open Heart, and made his profession of faith, "my Lord, my God" (let us remember John's words which testify to what he saw in front of the cross "so that you too may believe").

*d) Jn 21:15-19 – The Heart which asks to be loved*

Jesus questions Peter on the shore of the lake: "Do you love me?". There are various interpretations of these words, but from our perspective we can recognize the deep feeling of a fully human Heart which has given love and asks for love. As a symbolic image of Jesus' Heart we can link it with the words revealed to Saint Margaret Mary:

*Here is this Heart which has loved human beings so greatly to the point of consuming itself to testify to its love for them. And in thanks it has only received ingratitude from most of them, through irreverence and sacrilege, and through the coldness and contempt they have for me in this Sacrament of love. And what saddens me most is that the hearts which act this way are hearts consecrated to me" (June 1675).*

It is surprising to think that the Risen Jesus can also need our affection, that he asks for it just as earthly friends and lovers do. His Heart continues to be fully human even in his glorious state and asks and wants us to love him. We can also interpret along these same lines his humble supplication to the Apostles before he died: "Remain in my love" (Jn 15:9).

The Fathers of the Church refer abundantly to the symbolism of the Pierced Heart, in which they recognize the origins of the Church and the sacraments. There are magnificent theological interpretations of the texts quoted in the preceding section though I will not discuss them here since they are easily found in specialized works.

#### ***IV. The Christology of the heart of some saints.***

In the present work we are more interested in what took root in medieval times, where we situate the beginning of our spirituality as such. The devotion to Christ's humanity is found in the Benedictine and Franciscan schools with Saint Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) and Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153) as its first exponents. From then on many people have described their personal relationship with Jesus placing the accent on his Heart. I will quote only a few to help us remember what is essential and, with their help, tune our hearts to that of Jesus. Let us receive these writings as testimonies of the immense force of Jesus' Heart operating his love in the hearts of those beloved sons and daughters and as a stimulus for what he wishes to operate in us. I comment on them only very briefly since the texts speak for themselves.

a) Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (France, 1091-1153)

*What I cannot find in myself I confidently seek in the Roots of the Saviour, overflowing with goodness and mercy, which spread through the various wounds in his most holy body,*

*since his enemies pierced his hands and feet and opened his side with a lance: through these openings I can extract honey from the stone and sweet oil from the very hard rock; I can taste and see how sweet and gentle is the Lord. Then he meditated on thoughts of peace, without my understanding him. Who has ever known the Lord's feeling or ever entered into his council? But these nails with which he was pierced have become precious keys which have opened the treasure of his secrets for me, so that I may see the Lord's will. And who can now prevent me from clearly seeing these secrets and this will through his wounds?... The cruel iron transfixed his soul and wounded his heart, so that he might know how to have pity on my weaknesses. The secret of his heart can be seen through the openings in his body; yes, we can contemplate this sublime mystery of our God's infinite goodness; we can, I repeat, contemplate the merciful roots of our God, who has made the sun rise to visit us from above. What difficulty is there that God's roots should show themselves through the wounds? Because nothing, Lord, shows us as fully as these wounds that you are gentle, meek and most merciful. Nobody is more compassionate than he who gives his life for those sentenced to death and the condemned<sup>12</sup>.*

b) Saint Bonaventura (1221-1274)

*The Heart of the Lord was pierced with the lance so that through the visible wound we might recognize the invisible love. The wound in the Heart shows the wound in the soul<sup>13</sup>.*

*We penetrate, finally, into the most humble Heart of the sublime Jesus. The doorway is his side opened by the lance. Here the ineffable and desirable treasure of charity is hidden; here one meets devotion, one obtains the grace of tears, one learns meekness and patience in adversity, compassion for the afflicted and, above all, here we obtain that our heart becomes contrite and humbled<sup>14</sup>.*

c) Saint Gertrude the Great (1256-1301)

*Someone who has great experience in spiritual direction advised (me) to constantly meditate on the burning heart of the Crucified one...*

*(The Lord): "Since you have totally renounced your own will, I will instil every grace and joy of my heart into yours, and the more frequently you receive communion, the greater your contentment will be.*

*I have frequently given you my Heart, as a sign of our intimacy. Whenever you want to ask me anything, call on the Heart which accepted the Incarnation for love of human beings, that I may grant you the graces you ask for".*

*(Gertrude): "Through your wounded Heart, most beloved Lord, mine is so deeply touched by your love that what is earthly no longer concerns it and it can give itself entirely to your captivating love<sup>15</sup>.*

d) Saint Ignatius Loyola (Spain-Italy, 1491-1556)

Ignatius did not use the expression "Heart of Jesus" but his writings reflect his tender devotion and love for Christ's humanity contained in this spirituality. The object of the

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<sup>12</sup> from Sermon LXI about the Song of Songs, 41

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Cor Salvatoris, Josef Stierli, Editorial Herder, Barcelona, 1958, p. 126

<sup>14</sup> Obras de San Buenaventura, B.A.C., Madrid, 1967, p. 507

<sup>15</sup> Cor Salvatoris, pp. 134-135

Spiritual Exercises is to move the Exercitante to "a deep-felt knowledge of Our Lord, made man for me, that I may the better love and follow him " (104). This deep-felt inner knowledge is none other than love for the Heart.

The Ignatian Exercises are, finally, exercises of the human heart face to face with the Heart of God. The Heart of God is incarnate in Jesus, his Christ. The Catholic devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has found a strategic ally of the greatest importance in Ignatian spirituality<sup>16</sup>.

When the exercitante accompanies the scenes of Christ's passion, Ignatius invites him to ask for "sorrow in company with Christ in His sorrow, anguish with Christ in anguish, tears and a deep-felt sense of suffering, because Christ suffered so much for me" (SE 203). When contemplating the Risen One the instruction is to consider "Christ doing the work of consolation, comparing it with the way friends are accustomed to console one another" (SE 224).

The apostolic dimension specific to the spirituality of the Heart is well reflected in the Contemplation for Achieving Love which concludes the Exercises (230). In these words we recognize the basic attitude of offering of our own hearts promoted, among other things, by the AP:

*FIRST HEADING. This is to recall to mind the blessings of creation and redemption, and the special favours I have received. I will ponder with great affection how much God our Lord has done for me, and how much he has given me of what he possesses, and finally, how much, as far as he can, the same Lord desires to give himself to me according to his divine decrees. Then I will reflect upon myself, and consider, according to all reason and justice, what I ought to offer the Divine Majesty, that is, all I possess and myself with it. Thus, as one would do who is moved by great feeling, I will make this offering of myself:*

*Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. You have given it all to me. To you, O Lord, I return it all. All is yours, dispose of it wholly according to your will. Give me your love and your grace; it is all I need (234).*

These few references will do for now, leaving an in-depth study of the Ignatian course to other more specific studies<sup>17</sup>.

e) Saint Peter Canisius, S.J. (Germany 1521-1597)

We read in his "Testament" - the vision the Lord granted him on the morning of his solemn religious profession while he was praying in the Chapel of the Most Holy Sacrament in Saint Peter's (Rome):

*My soul was in a certain manner prostrate in front of you: ugly, fallen and stained by its innumerable faults and sins. But you then opened your holy breast for me, and it seemed to me that I directly saw your Heart. You ordered me then to drink from this spring, inviting me, my Redeemer, to take the water of my salvation from your fountain. Then I yearned ardently*

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<sup>16</sup> M. A. Rui-Wamba, S.J., in the article: Los que más se querrán afectar (digital version)

<sup>17</sup> For example, *Il mistero del Cuore di Cristo e la Spiritualità Ignaziana*, Charles Bernard, S.J., Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis, Roma, 1991

*for torrents of faith, hope and charity to flow over me; I thirsted to be washed, clothed and put in order completely by you.*

*I dared to touch your Heart – so lovingly lovable – with my lips, and to quench my thirst in it. After, you promised to cover the nakedness of my spirit with the triple habit of peace, love and perseverance, so timely a gift for my profession soon to occur. With this garment of salvation I am fully confident that I will lack for nothing and that everything will be to the advantage of your greater glory<sup>18</sup>.*

f) Saint Claude La Colombière (France, 1641-1682)

*This Heart continues, to the fullness of its ability, with the same feelings and, above all, always burning with love for human beings, always ready to shed on them every kind of grace and blessing, always sensitive to our sufferings, always stimulated by the desire to share his treasures and give himself to us, always ready to welcome us and act as refuge, home, heaven in this life<sup>19</sup>.*

*I cannot attain this oblivion of myself which must open the door to the Heart of Jesus Christ, from which I feel very estranged. I see clearly that if God does not have pity on me I shall die in great imperfection. It would be a great delight for me if I could, at the end, after so much time spent in religious life, discover the way to obtain total oblivion of myself. I asked our good Master that I might not do anything against his will and that for all the rest he dispose of me as he sees fit. I beg of him, may the condition to which he has reduced me please him. Infirmary was something absolutely necessary for me, without it, I do not know what would have become of me; I am convinced that it is one of the great mercies God has granted me<sup>20</sup>.*

*Everything God does for you now is little or nothing compared to what he wishes to do; in the name of Jesus Christ, do not oppose his designs; give him the freedom to operate, I ask you, help him as much as you can; be faithful in the execution of everything he inspires, and then you will see the admirable effects of your docility. What unhappiness if you place any obstacle in the way of the signs of the good will he has for you<sup>21</sup>.*

g) The Blessed Miguel Pro (Mexico, 1891-1927)

*A burning Heart allowed a ray which struck mine to escape from its divine fire; this ray burnt my heart, its flame is not extinguished; this flame lives intact in the depths of my being and guides and illuminates me and makes me continue further. Most gentle love, strong love, disinterested love, outstanding love, almost infinite love of my soul for Christ. I who feel your beneficial work, and know that even in the midst of the greatest dangers you grant me victory...*

*Chaste love, tender love, divine love, eternal love, who gave me my vocation and has preserved it until today, and will preserve it, I know, until I am consumed by the flames of this same love...*

*Love of angels, unlimited love, heroic love, love of all loves together, love-charity of God... this is why I am as happy as I am; this is why I am as steadfast as I am!... and his victim,*

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<sup>18</sup> *Cor Salvatoris*, op.cit. pp. 164-165

<sup>19</sup> Na Escola do Coração de Jesus com Claudio La Colombière, Gérard Dufour, Ed. Loyola, Sao Paulo, Brasil, 2000, p. 34

<sup>20</sup> Op. cit. p. 45

<sup>21</sup> Op. cit. p. 52

as I have been!<sup>22</sup>.

h) Saint Alberto Hurtado (Chile, 1901-1952)

*Love Jesus Christ. Until your last breath become more and more passionate each day concerning his adorable person. Study him, examine him, enquire about him, explain him untiringly to yourself and to others, until you know him by heart, or even better, until you become assimilated to him, until you lose yourself in him. May he be completely and each day more at the centre of your thoughts, the bond of your knowledge, the practical goal of whatever you study. Make it morally the only object, the sovereign subject, the triumphing weapon of your apostolate... like the man full of and possessed by Jesus Christ, like the man who deliberately or not, if this were possible, speaks untiringly of Jesus Christ and speaks of the abundance of his Heart.*

From a Talk to University students, Feast of the Sacred Heart (drawn from longer text):

*Christ's love is full of tenderness and solicitude not only for our souls but for our bodies too, for the physical suffering which he heals even without being asked to; for the sadness of his friends, for the hunger of the poor which he hastens to satisfy. And with what delicacy he protects his hungry disciples when they eat the ears of wheat, with what tenderness he prepares breakfast after a night of fishing.*

*And this love of Christ, this love of the Son of God, this love of Jesus is what we honour in the devotion to the Sacred Heart. And if this devotion has always been a lovable one, today it is the saving devotion. What does the world need most at the present moment? What the world needs today is a generation that loves, that truly loves, that puts into effect the idea of love: to want good, the good of others before one's own, the good of others at the cost of one's own life; the good of everyone, the good of the poor and of the modest employee, the good of the poor widow who does not belong to a syndicate, of the children in the gutters; the good of the prostitute...*

*Love is what the poor modern world needs. Its sorrows are greater than they have ever been. And it is our duty to give it this love. We must reclaim what is ours, what constitutes the greatness even of errors: what is most ours, charity, the love of Christ.*

*But do not let this love of ours be speeches, books, precious pages. Nor must we be content with flourishing encyclicals and pastorals: their truths are very beautiful and nobody will demean them: what demeans them is their not having been accomplished.*

*What the world needs is works, like those of Francis of Assisi, of Peter Claver, of Damian of Veuster... And what, concretely, must these works of charity, of love, be?*

*Awaken in us a hunger and thirst for justice. Hunger and thirst for total truth. Hunger and thirst for Christ: to know him, to know his doctrine, to study it in its social consequences. To allay social unrest, we must work for the suffering, in particular that of the poor. To increase social sense. Not to rest when we see evil; being non conformist... not satisfied with offering the sky to others while we comfortably possess the earth, for this is the most brutal and bitter of ironies.*

*Give something which is very necessary: love, charity, understanding. We are so divided and we so need to love one another, understand one another, end this suspicion, this mutual*

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<sup>22</sup> Beato Miguel Agustín Pro, Su Corazón, su Pensamiento, Rafael Cervantes P., S.J., Mexico, 2006, p. 8

*lack of trust. Let us embrace Christ. And if the problems are contingent why shouldn't we give our opinion? Respect for the human person is something basic in Christianity. Provided that we obey the hierarchy and remain united in what is essential.*

*United in Christ, united with Christ. More united among ourselves. The measure of our union will be that of our union in Christ and with Christ. Let us unite in the only One in whom we can remain united, in Christ. Tomorrow, all in the Heart of Christ. To place all human beings in Christ's Heart in the Mass.*

## **V. Conclusion**

We have been on a biblical and historical journey aimed at opening us "with an open heart" to Jesus' loving Heart. We have wanted to allow ourselves to be captured by the gentleness, generosity, valour, humility of this so human and yet so divine Heart.

Our task now is that of personal contemplation and adoration in order to learn his style of loving and live it. At the beginning of this article we proposed developing a Christology from the heart, from each person's heart, from the Heart of Jesus. We hope that we have helped to open further the unfathomable door of Jesus' disproportionate love for us. Now the intimate language of our love must continue with him. We will continue to ask him to make our hearts similar to his, until the definitive meeting in which both hearts, his and ours, can unite without restrictions in the dialogue of love which will never end.

Let us conclude by listening to Father Pedro Arrupe, the friend of his Heart, speaking to us about love:

*Nothing can be more important than finding God. In other words, falling in love with him in a definitive and absolute manner. What you fall in love with catches your imagination and ends by leaving its mark on everything. It will be what decides what gets you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you use your weekends, what you read, what you know, what breaks your heart, what overcomes you with joy and gratitude. In love! Remain in love! Everything will be different.*