

**The Heart of Jesus, spring that quenches our thirst.
Notes for a renewal of the theology of the Sacred Heart¹**

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‘Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.’ (I Jn.4:11)

‘He [the deacon Santo] remained inflexible and resolute, constant in professing his faith, washed and strengthened by the celestial fountain of living water which gushed from the heart of Christ.’ (*Acts of the Martyrs of Lyon and Vienne*, in Eusebius HE, V 1.22)

Perhaps there are those who consider the theology of the Heart of Christ something obsolete and out of date, over-sentimental, quaint, tied in its expression to a period gone for ever.² Following John Paul II’s renewed injunction to the Society of Jesus on 5 October 1986 to spread devotion to the Sacred Heart,³ confirmed by Benedict XVI on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Pius XII’s encyclical *Haurietis Aquas*⁴, I shall set out as briefly as possible its theological foundation and some of its perspectives⁵, but before that it will be necessary to give a clear statement of the lines of approach.

¹ This reproduces, with some slight alterations, the paper presented at the International Congress Experience and the mystery of God, organised by the Universidad Pontificia Comillas, Madrid, 24-27 October 2007. The subject I was asked to develop was *Love of Jesus Christ. Theology of the Sacred Heart*. The presentations and papers were published by St. Paul’s Press, edited by P. CEBOLLADA. An abridged version of the text was published in the review *Sal Terrae* 96 (June 2008) 499-512

² Some difficulties are already mentioned in Pius XII, *Haurietis aquas*, 1956, esp. 3 and 28. See also Pius XI, *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, 1928

See also R. Gutzwiller, ‘Dificultades’, in J.Stierli (ed.), *Cor salvatoris*, Herder, Barcelona 1958, 32-52; K.Rahner, ‘Some theses concerning devotion to the Sacred heart of Jesus’ in *Cor salvatoris*, 209-246,227; J.Stierli ‘Herz Jesu’ in *LThK* V (1960) c.289; P. Arrupe, *Faced with a new situation: difficulties and paths* (27.04.1872), collected in ID, *Hope in Him alone, selection of texts on the Heart of Jesus*, prologue by Karl Rahner, General Secretariat of the Apostleship of Prayer, Rome 1983, 18-28; M.M. Gonzales y Gil de S., ‘El problema de la impostación del tema del Sagrado Corazón en el tratado de cristología’ in R. Vekemans (ed.), *Cor Christi. Historia – teología, espiritualidad y pastoral*, Instituto Internacional del Corazón de Jesús, Bogotá 1980, 351-359; M.Walsh, ‘Some reflections on the theology of devotion to the Sacred Heart, *Cor Christi*,360-368; C.Pozo, ‘La reparación al Corazón de Cristo y las nuevas tendencias cristológicas’, *Cor Christi*, 547-556; I.de la Potterie, *Il mistero del cuore trafitto. Fondamenti biblici della spiritualità del Cuore di Gesù*, Dehoniane, Bologna 1988, 7, 55-57, 93

³ Cf. the extraordinary number of Oración y servicio, (1989/2); Complementary Norms § 267.1

⁴ BENEDICT XVI, *Letter to the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the publication of the encyclical ‘Haurietis Aquas’ of Pius XII, on the cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus* (23.05.2006)

⁵ For a good overview: ‘Herz Jesu’ in *LThK* V (1996), ch. 51-58; J.SOLANO: ‘Introducción Síntesis de lo que es la devoción al Sagrado Corazón’, in *Cor Salvatoris*, 13-22

1. BASIC LINE OF APPROACH: THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE HEART

1.1. HEART, A PRIMORDIAL WORD OF SCRIPTURE

Heart is a primordial word in many cultures, including our own; it is a proto-word,⁶ which places us before what is basic and fundamental, before something deep and from the origins, never completely penetrable by rational conceptualisation. ‘Heart’ speaks of persons taken as a whole reality, in their truth and authenticity, as denoted by the Castilian expression ‘I say it to you heart in hand.’ ‘Heart’ alludes to the depths of persons, their interiority, their most genuine thoughts and feelings, their ultimate quality. The verbs conjugated with ‘heart’ refer to persons in their authenticity and interiority, at the centre and depth of their souls; so, for example, the heart breaks, goes cold, shrinks, gives itself, expands, opens. One can be ‘in good heart’, or act ‘heartlessly’.

The Scriptures gather together this manner of seeing in a general way.⁷ For the Old Testament ‘heart’ designates the bodily organ, but is much more often used in the figurative sense. So ‘heart’ (*lêb, lêbab*) refers to what is intimate in a person, to their centre. A large number of spiritual operations are assigned to the heart. It is the seat of desire, will, feelings and knowledge, in such a way that the heart comes to designate the whole person. Still more interesting, the heart is the decisive sphere of relationship with God. A good Israelite is distinguished by seeking Yahweh with his whole heart and soul (Dt.4:29) and by interiorising the prayer of the Shema: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength’ (Dt.6:4-5; cf. 10:12, 11:13.) God knows and searches the human heart in depth. (Jer.17: 10)

Scripture also speaks to us of a heart of God, with desires, feelings, designs, compassion and knowledge (e.g. Gen.6:6; 8:21; Hos.11:8; I Kings 9:3; Jer.7: 31; 44:21). So it is possible to recognise a desire of God to circumcise hearts (Dt.10:16; 30:6), that they may reach authentic knowledge of God, and the behaviour that goes with it. The new covenant will mean the substitution of a heart of stone, hardened and ignorant of God, for a heart of flesh, which is pleasing to God and knows him in truth. (cf. Ezek.36:26; Jer.31:33-34) With the new covenant in Christ we have been given this new circumcised heart (Rom.2:29).

⁶ K.RAHNER treats this fully in ‘Mira este Corazón’!, *Escritos de Teología III*, Taurus, Madrid., 1968, 357-367

⁷ The basic information can be found in some contributions to *Cor Christi*: H.CAZELLES, ‘El Corazón en la Biblia’, 215-221; S.GAROFALO, ‘El Corazón en la Biblia, centro de la persona humana’ 222-228; A.DOPKINS, Base escriturística para la teología del Sagrado Corazón’, 229-254; S.TALAVERO, ‘Corazón’ en algunos contextos bíblicos y en el marco trinitario de la devoción al Corazón de Jesús’, 255-273; J.HEER, ‘El Corazón traspasado. Comparación entre la teología joánica y el culto al Sagrado Corazón’ 288-303. Also in general dictionaries: “b”l – lêb – Herz”, in THAT I, c. 861-867; ‘Corazon’, in L.COENEN – E.BEYTEUTHER – H.BIETENHARD, *Diccionario teológico del Nuevo Testamento*, Sigueme, Salamanca 1980, 1,339-341; “kardia” in H.BALZ – G.SCHNEIDER, *Diccionario exegético del Nuevo Testamento*, Sigueme, Salamanca,1996, 1,c. 2195-2199. Cf. P.MOURLON, *El hombre en el lenguaje bíblico*, Verbo Divino, Estella 1988; H.WOLFF, *Anthropología del Antiguo Testamento*, Sigueme, Salamanca 1997 (orig. 1973), 63-86

In the NT this understanding of the heart, taken from the biblical mentality, basically continues. In what we have already indicated, it is accentuated as much as possible that the heart is the centre of the spiritual life, for good and for evil. For from the heart are born the best and the worst human inclinations (e.g. Mk.7:21; Rom. 2:5; 8:27; 10:10; 1Cor. 14:25; 2 Cor.3:14; 1 Thess.2:4; 2 Thess.3:5; Heb.3:12), obedience to God and stubbornness. God is asked to strengthen the believer's heart (1Thess.3:11-13; 2 Thess. 2:16-17; 3:5). Conversion of heart, of enormous importance, is identified with faith, which is God's work (Acts 16:14). This conversion is made durable by the Spirit's indwelling in believers (Rom.5:5; 2 Cor.1.22; Gal.4:6-7), transforming their hearts, bringing them to authentic life in Christ, thanks to whom they now know God, are pleasing to him, are filled with knowledge of him. They live and have their being in Christ; love their brethren in Christ (Phil.1:8), and behave with purity of heart (cf. Heb.10:22; 1Jn.1:7), as one in whom Christ dwells. (Eph.3:17) Thus the seed of God's Kingdom, which Jesus Christ planted in our hearts, bears fruit. (cf. Mt.13:19; Lk.8: 12, 15)

There is no doubt that with these themes we touch on core elements of Christian anthropology and soteriology; to be a Christian consists in a spiritual transformation of heart, a precious gift of God, thanks to Jesus Christ. We shall go more deeply into details later.

1.2 WISDOM OF HEART CALLS FOR A SYMBOLIC EPISTEMOLOGY.

A primary factor which marks a theology and spirituality of the heart is rooted in the sphere in which it necessarily moves: its horizon of understanding is symbolical.⁸ It is typical for the theology of the Sacred Heart to play with the combination of images and symbols which are associated and combine (heart, lance, side, blood and water, lamb, good shepherd), as is so characteristic of patristic theology. These images, in turn, full of symbols, like icons, represent the mysteries of faith, move the feelings, arouse affections, shape the believing subject and introduce him or her into the world that they evoke. For that reason, in this way of approaching the mysteries of faith, spirituality and theology, personal prayer and the official liturgy, contemplation and practical life, are closely united. Its symbolic character does not abate, still less its vigour or its depth. On the contrary, what speaks to us of the primordial, the original, the ultimate mystery of God and man, can be represented only in a symbolic way, so bringing us closer, in a less unfortunate way, to the mystery which is never wholly comprehensible through limited human concepts.⁹

For the same reason, the theology and spirituality of the Heart of Christ bring together a series of biblical texts in which it is understood that essentially they speak of Christ's heart, without the need for the literal presence of the word *heart*. It comes from the valid intuition that where the heart is spoken of so much, as of

⁸ An aspect which is very much present in PIUS XII, HA 2, 6, 15, 21, 24, 27-29

⁹ Cf. A.TORNOS, *Función Simbólica y trabajo teológico*; MCom 42 (1984) 169-187; M.DE COCAGNAC, *Los símbolos bíblicos. Léxico teológico*, Desclée, Bilbao 1996 (1994); P.RODRIGUEZ PANIZO, *La condición simbólica de lo religioso*; MCom 55 (1887) 53-75; J.M.MARDONES, *La vida del símbolo. Dimensión simbólica de la religión*, Sal Terrae, Santander, 2003

interiority, of ultimate awareness, of deep desire, of what is closest to us, of deep intimacy, in one way or another we are speaking of the Lord's heart. There is no strict distinction, just as our ordinary language makes no distinction, between the heart in the figurative and in the literal sense, even if what predominates is the understanding of the heart as seat and ultimate expression of the depth of the person.

A second fundamental factor, in continuity with the symbolic epistemology in which we are moving, is that the kind of understanding in question is one proper to the heart, rather than of a rational or speculative kind. The principal approach to the theme we are considering can only be reached in its depth in the personal colloquy 'heart to heart' with the Lord¹⁰, in an interpersonal relationship in which the love of the Lord's Heart is revealed, and from which arises the desire for a response of love defining one's own heart, together with generous offerings.¹¹ This is the perspective dearest to the whole of Eastern spirituality,¹² with an undoubted Biblical foundation. It is enough to mention Mary, who kept and meditated in her heart all that happened around her in relation to her Son.¹³ (Lk.2: 19, 51; cf. 1:66) Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach's magnificent series of homilies on the Heart of Jesus covers in a vibrant way the most beautiful harmonies in this symphony of hearts.¹⁴

This perspective does not place us outside the theological field, properly speaking. According to St. Thomas Christ's Heart is the key to understanding the whole of Scripture.¹⁵ Karl Rahner considers that only a person who loves and prays will be able to understand what is said about Christ's heart, because such an understanding demands an affinity with the object, a particular disposition and an appropriate attitude.¹⁶ In our time it was A. de Saint Exupéry who made current the famous sentence from chapter 21 of *The Little Prince*: 'we only see well with the heart, what is really important is invisible to the eyes', popularising in a simple and profound way the characteristic nature of a *cordis* epistemology, an indispensable component of any *theologia cordis*.¹⁷

The subject given to us, *The love of Jesus Christ*, within the context of encounter with the neighbour and with the transcendent, has now been placed in its just measure: it is about an encounter between persons or, more precisely, between hearts which

¹⁰ JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to the Superior General of the Society of Jesus* (Paray-le-Monial, 5.10.1986)

¹¹ IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, *Spiritual Exercises*, 98

¹² Cf., for example, TH.SPIDLİK, 'El corazón en la espiritualidad del oriente cristiano', in *Cor Christi*, 145 -157; J.MELLONI, *Los caminos del corazón. El conocimiento espiritual en la "Filokalia"*, Sal Terrae, Santander 1995

¹³ Cf. I.DE LA POTTERIE, *Cuore trafitto*, 158-167

¹⁴ P-H.KOLVENBACH, *The Apostleship of Prayer towards the third millennium: Prayer and Service* (January-March 2007) 45-106

¹⁵ *On Psalm 21:11 (Opera Omnia XIV, Parmae 1863 – New York 1949, p.221)* I owe this reference to A.TEJERINA, 'Corazón de Cristo', in GRUPO DE ESPIRITUALIDAD IGNACIANA, *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana*, Mensajero – Sal Terrae, Bilbao – Santander 2007, 1, 484-492, 485

¹⁶ 'Some theses', 210

¹⁷ Cf. A.GRILLMEIER, 'Theologia Cordis. Das Herz in Glaube und Frömmigkeit' in *Fragmente zur Christologie*, Herder, Freiburg 1997, 429-450

love and long for a response of love, between the Lord and each one of his disciples. Now let us see, in broad outline, what theology suggests to us about this fact.

2. STRONG LINES FOR A FOUNDATION

2.1 IN SEARCH OF A CONTEMPORARY AND SUITABLE ORIENTATION

The theology and spirituality of the Sacred Heart, inspired by the movement which began around the mystical experiences of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, has produced enormous fruits of piety, holiness, charity and apostolate. However, this version of devotion to the Sacred Heart is very much marked in its forms by elements with a particular accent, dependent on a particular sensibility, which give it a specific profile, not necessarily to be identified without further argument with the theology and spirituality of the Sacred Heart in the strict sense.¹⁸ Moreover, the devotion which originated in Paray-le-Monial is characterised, according to Karl Rahner,¹⁹ by three traits which give it a profile of its own and situate it at a specific point in Church history, theology, culture and spirituality. Thus, Rahner says, the Paray-le-Monial devotion would be characterised by a) *interiority*, which looks to the feelings and internal affections of the heart of Jesus; b) an *intense faith in the love of God*, in spite of which the said love seems to fail, confronted with a growing alienation of the world and of society from God, and an acute awareness of the superabundance of sin; and c) *reparation* to this Heart so unjustly affronted.

Our present theological and spiritual sensibility does not resonate spontaneously with these three coordinates. Although current Christology is not unaware of the question of the knowledge and feelings which the Lord Jesus may have had, its orientation is influenced by historical investigation into Jesus, and is directed rather towards his messianic consciousness and awareness of sonship, not allowing itself to be led into speculation about Jesus Christ's suffering through sin in the course of universal history, or the suffering caused him at this very moment by the affronts of sinners who despise the splendid gifts of the Redeemer. Soteriology is directed, as in the first millennium, towards understanding the objectivity of the salvation achieved by the events of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, rather than towards exploration of the intimate feelings of the Redeemer's heart. This is obviously not to silence the conscious offering of love which is foremost in Jesus Christ's sacrificial surrender.²⁰ The theology of reparation has ceased to be cultivated as a discipline

¹⁸ Cf. PIUS XI, HA 24; K. RAHNER, 'Some theses', 221

¹⁹ 'Some theses', 226. Complemented by the historical contributions in *Cor salvatoris*: H. RAHNER, 'Los comienzos de la veneración al corazón de Jesús en la patrística', 83-110; J. STIERLI, 'El culto al corazón de Jesús desde fines de la época patrística hasta Santa Margarita María Alacoque', 111-176; ID., 'El desarrollo del culto litúrgico al corazón de Jesús en la Edad Media', 177-207. Cf. H. RAHNER, 'Flumina de ventre Christi. Die patristische Auslegung von Joh. 7:37-38' in ID. *Symbole der Kirche. Die Ekklesiologie der Vater*, Otto Müller, Salzburg 1964, 177-235

²⁰ E.g. COMISIÓN TEOLÓGICA INTERNACIONAL, 'Cuestiones selectas sobre Dios Redentor' (1994), in ID, Documentos 1969-1996 (C. POZO ed.), BAC, Madrid 1998, 499-556; B. SESBOÛÉ, *Jesucristo, el único mediador, Ensayo sobre la redención y la salvación*, 2 vols, Secretariado Trinitario, Salamanca 1990-1993, on reparation: 1,339-341, 349-382; J. WERBICK,

associated with soteriology, penitence or asceticism²¹. Even though it is certain that today the distance between Christian faith and society in the western world has increased greatly, the view of the world chosen by the Second Vatican Council, particularly in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, was that of looking for points of contact, rather than distant and affronted reproach. On the other hand, the way of looking at the sinner which predominates in theology is very much marked by the parables of mercy and by the results of historical investigation of Jesus, which make merciful love²² outweigh the offence inflicted on God or Jesus Christ by the sinner, despite all the magnificent development presupposed by the concept of structural sin (liberation theology) and the structures of sin (John Paul II). All in all, the Paray-le-Monial style, as such, seems not only difficult to recover in its specific and most characteristic devotional forms, but quite honestly complicated to put back into its original shape if one chooses to retain it within the main lines of contemporary theology.²³

Since it does not seem appropriate to put forward a spirituality and a theology isolated from the rest of the movement of culture, theology and spirituality, if one wants in some way to recover the theology of the Sacred Heart and the spirituality that goes with it, one has to choose a new path, which is perfectly legitimate, given that the form of devotion promoted by St. Margaret Mary Alacoque originated in the 17th century and was indebted to a large stream flowing from Scripture itself, from the mystery of Christ himself, which had not previously, over centuries, produced the specific devotional forms which were proposed with so much emphasis, and not a few difficulties,²⁴ from that moment.²⁵ Neither GS 22 nor John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* takes up the style of Paray-le-Monial; all the same, both make clear and substantial mention of the importance of Christ's human heart, as centre and distillation of the revelation of God's mercy. Benedict XVI, for his part,

Soteriología, Herder, Barcelona 1992; H. SCHÜRMAN, *El destino de Jesús: su vida y su muerte*, Sigueme, Salamanca 2003

²¹ The much greater weight given to this thematic in PIUS XI's encycle, MR (1928), esp.5-115, than in that of PIUS XII, HA (1956) calls for attention, in that the concept appears, without insistence on the term, but much more centred on defending the cult of the Sacred Heart

A valuable attempt, which highlights the need to open new perspectives: N. MARTÍNEZ GAYOL (dir.), *Retorno de amor. Teología, historia y espiritualidad de la reparación*, Sigueme, Salamanca, 2008. Other attempts: C.POZO, 'La reparación al corazón de Cristo y las nuevas tendencias cristológicas', *Cor Christi*, 547-556; L.M.MENDIZÁBAL, 'La reparación consoladora en el culto al Sagrado Corazón de Jesús', *ibid.* 570-584

²² Cf., e.g., JOHN PAUL II, *Dives in misericordia*, 13b

²³ The present liturgy of the solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus does not emphasize especially the typical lines of the devotion in the Paray –le-Monial style. It is possible to see the difference of emphasis between the first collect suggested and the second: the latter is more in the Paray –le-Monial style (reparation), while the former is set on a general biblical level, as I am trying to do in this work.

²⁴ R.GUTZWILLER, 'Dificultades', 42 notes that three pontiffs rejected formally the cult of the Sacred Heart, and that the first liturgical approbation, even though geographically limited, was a century after the great private revelations.

²⁵ PIUS XII, HA3and 25-28. The categorical affirmations of the value of devotion to the heart of Jesus, as, for example, 'in this most happy sign, and in this consequent form of devotion, is it not true that *the sum of all religion and even the norm of most perfect life* are contained?' (PIUS XI, MR3, underlined in the original), and 'the cult of the Sacred heart is considered, in practice, as the most complete profession of the Christian religion' (PIUS XII, HA 24) are not linked intrinsically to the particular forms of devotion in which they are manifested at a specific moment, but to the substantial content which accompanied them. Cf. PIUS XII, HA, 29; K>RAHNER, 'Algunas tesis', 227

in his first encyclical, *Deus caritas est*, does not hesitate to refer to Jesus Christ as God's love incarnate (esp. DCE 12-15), or fail to mention 'the pierced side of Christ' (DCE 12), but neither does he place himself in the perspective of Paray-le-Monial.²⁶

Aware of this situation, Fr. Ignace de la Potterie has attempted an approach within the perspective of contemporary Christology; that is, one which begins from the historical investigation on Jesus and the reconsideration of Christ's humanity which starts from a fresh look at the Council of Chalcedon.²⁷ This is a valid intention. However, I shall not follow this line, for three reasons. First, because of the difficulties involved in the historical investigation on Jesus, and his way of handling Biblical texts, specifically the gospels, discarding for theological interpretation those which do not stand up to the sieve of historical criticism.²⁸ Furthermore, the gospel texts most relevant for the theology and spirituality of the Sacred Heart are to be found in St. John's gospel, for the understanding of which symbolism is indispensable.²⁹ Secondly, because this way of proceeding does not connect easily with the approach in the earlier epigraph, where we chose a symbolic epistemology as the most appropriate to understand with the heart the theology and spirituality of the heart. Thirdly, because it seems appropriate to find and propose some radical anthropology with a foundation in our cultural situation, with which we can connect the theology and spirituality of the Sacred Heart. For these reasons I shall set out from *thirst*, which will allow us to connect more easily with the complex scene of the pierced side, authentic neurological and biblical centre of the theology and spirituality of the Sacred Heart³⁰

2.2. THIRST, ANTHROPOLOGICAL ROOT OF THE HUMAN PERSON AND THE SCRIPTURES.

a) Human thirst

Thirst is a constant in the life of every person, beginning with babies, who can very easily become dehydrated. Thirst brings us back to the fundamental experience that we need something constitutive of ourselves and that we cannot give to ourselves, but which we have to receive as a gift from outside. Our organism does not generate

²⁶ More details in G.URIBARRI, *Gramática y método de Deus caritas est, primera encíclica de Benedicto XVI: Communio NE2* (Autumn 2006) 43-56

²⁷ *Cuore trafitto*, esp.7-15 and 55-87

²⁸ Cf. G.URIBARRI, *Exégesis científica y teología dogmática. Materiales para un diálogo*. EstB 64 (2006) 547-578. Para una nueva racionalidad de la exégesis, *Diagnóstico y propuesta: Estudios Bíblicos* 65 (2007) 253-306; *La singular humanidad de Jesucristo. El tema mayor de la cristología contemporánea*, San Pablo – U.P. Comillas, Madrid 2008, esp. 67-102 and 149-161; 'Para una interpretación teológica de la Escritura. La contribución de J.Ratzinger-Benedicto XVI' in S. MADRIGAL 9ed.), *El pensamiento de Joseph Ratzinger, teólogo y papa*, San Pablo – U.P.Comillas, Madrid 2009, printing.

²⁹ Cf, e.g., S.CASTRO, *Evangelio de Juan: comprensión exegético-existencial*, Descleé – U.P. Comillas, Bilbao-Madrid 2001; J.M.MARTIN-MORENO, *Personajes del cuarto evangelio*, Descleé – U.P. Comillas, Bilbao-Madrid 2002.

³⁰ So also: R.GUTZWILLER. *op.cit.* 50; J.HEER, 'El corazón traspasado',289; J.RATZINGER, *Miremos al Traspasado*, Fundación San Juan, Rafaela (Santa Fe- Argentina) 2007 (orig. 1984), 59-89, which in turn is inspired to a large extent by H.Rahner

in itself the water that it needs, it has to take it in and receive it from the medium in which it lives. If there is a failure in the ecological medium in which it lives, through a drought or a breakdown, and the lack continues for some time, our organism cannot substitute for this external source on which its life depends. Still more, this peremptory and unavoidable need informs us that we are made up essentially of something that we have to receive, that constitutionally we are open to receive the gift of water as gift of life.

This simple realisation opens on the physiological and anthropological level. So organic life needs water; but human life is incessant search for water which quenches its deep thirst, and gives it authentic and true life. This, on the anthropological level, reveals us as beings absolutely open to the gift of the life that quenches our thirst as a constitutive characteristic of our very essence.³¹

In rural societies physical thirst, even intensive thirst, is a familiar experience. In our opulent societies, for the great majority it is easy to quench bodily thirst in daily life with a number of refreshments, drinks of every kind, as well as with drinkable running water in a large number of homes. However, the crisis of meaning and of values is already a subject to talk about: the loss of ultimate motivations, the fragmentation that breaks life up in its interior unity; the stressful rhythms in the workplace that destroy family life, psychological balance and the meaning of work itself; hedonism and consumerism as escape and as compensation for pent-up frustration; the boredom that attacks the average westerner, caught up in the routine of salaried work to which he sells his soul for a superfluous survival, slave of the great superficialities of consumerism.³² Faced with this situation, the only way out seems to be the search for sexual satisfaction, through a permanently open exploration of new possibilities.³³ Chapter XXIII of *The Little Prince* illustrates splendidly the losses that we suffer through the way we deal with our thirst:

- Good day! – said the Little Prince.
- Good day! – replied the salesman

He was a seller of pills perfect for taking away thirst. You take one a week and you won't want to drink.

- Why are you selling that? – asked the Little Prince
- Because with this you save a lot of time. According to calculations by experts, you save fifty-three minutes a week.
- And what do you do with those fifty-three minutes?
- Whatever each one wants to do.
- If I had fifty-three minutes to spare – thought the Little Prince – I'd walk calmly to a fountain.'

³¹ All this resonates with the OT understanding of the human person as *nepheš*; cf. H.WOLFF, *Antropología del Antiguo Testamento*, 25-44

³² The film *Crash* (2004) describes the unconscious acceleration of US society, the greatest icon of western society.

³³ A good description in the film *American Beauty* (1999)

In short, the average westerner is thirsty, more or less consciously, for water which will quench the deep thirst of his heart, thirst for truth, for wellbeing, for the ultimate meaning of sacrifices and sufferings, for successful co-existence, in fact for happiness. The average westerner longs to find a source of real fulfilment in life, which would fill him with joy, energy, vitality, hope, satisfaction, and let him dance with joy in the midst of an exhausting and threatening society, though he is sustained by a very much reduced human nucleus of affective and family support. Our fellow-citizens are experiencing thirst for transcendence, for eternal life as a constitutive part of our own essence, and are groping for a way of satisfying it, while sometimes trying to suppress it, to ignore it.

b) Thirst and water in Scripture.

Scripture knows this thirst as a deep need in the human person. Within a theme which is much wider, I shall content myself with three significant instances of thirst and its correlative, water. First, the people of Israel is aware of its birth in the Exodus: in coming out of Egypt. Not only are there the primordial waters at the beginning of creation (Gen.1:2), but also the waters of the Red Sea, in passing through which Israel was formed. (Ex.14:15-31). Moses, earlier, had already been rescued from water. (Ex.2:1-10). For the Christian, also, water will be the source of regeneration for real life in baptism, birth from water and the Spirit. (Jn.3:5)

Second, in journeying through the desert the people experienced thirst. Yahweh, through Moses, quenched this thirst (Ex.15: 22-25; 17:1-7; Num.20:1-13; Deut.8:15; Ps.78:16-20), thus showing his power, his generosity, his lordship and his desire to give the people a good life. Later, Paul will understand that the rock from which the water sprang was Christ himself (1Cor.10:3-5) In this way the people of Israel came to know that Yahweh is the only one who can assuage their thirst. This way of seeing nourished the prayer of Israel, which knew that it was thirsting for God (Ps.42:3; 63:2), the only one who can quench its deepest thirst (Is.55:1). From this it is easy to understand that hope in a future messiah, like Moses, includes in its outlines the ability to dispense water and assuage thirst, although in more radical and definitive way than Moses.

Third and last, the prophet Ezekiel (47:1-12) envisages the Temple as the eschatological source of the purification and revivification of everything. The eschatological waters which will flow from the Temple will re-engender everything that comes into contact with them, into the fullness of new life.

These three themes flow in different ways towards the heart of Jesus. As Christians we are reborn to life in baptism thanks to Christ, in being submerged in the water sanctified by his death and resurrection (cf. Rom.6:3-5; Mt.3:11 and parallels; Jn.1:33); Christ is the new Moses, from whose breast spring streams of living water (Jn.4:10,14; 7:37-39; 19:34-37; 1Cor.10:4); Christ is the new, eschatological Temple (Jn.2:19,21), from whom flow the waters of life. (Apoc.22:1;7:17) with a possible allusion to the original rivers of paradise.

2.3. THE HEART OF CHRIST, SOURCE OF LIVING WATER

a) *The thirst of Jesus*

It is interesting as a preliminary to consider the thirst of Jesus, of which Scripture speaks.³⁴ The passage is well-known:

‘Later, knowing that all was now completed, (*panta tetelestai*) and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, (*ina teleothei*) Jesus said “I am thirsty”.’

.... When he had received the vinegar, Jesus said “It is finished” (*tetelestai*).³⁵ With that he bowed his head and gave up his spirit (*paredoken pneuma*).’ (Jn.19:28,30)

To what text of Scripture can this refer? Psalms 22:16; 63:2 and 69:22 can be considered as possibilities. Both Ps.22 and Ps.69 relate to Christ’s Passion, so that we can more easily discard Ps.63, since it speaks in a general way of thirst for God on the part of the one praying. So, then, can we be satisfied with the reference to vinegar in Ps.69, as if drinking from the sponge soaked in vinegar were a precious element of revelation? Certainly it sounds somewhat strange and difficult to fill with theological content, if in fact it is not referring to something else. In Ps.22 a calamitous situation is being described as a whole, and includes the sufferer’s thirst as one more detail. Why did St. John’s Gospel have to single it out in such an emphatic way, precisely in the final moment of Jesus’ life, and as sign of the ultimate fulfilment of *everything*?

So it seems suitable to look for another interpretation which, without denying the physical thirst natural for person in a calamitous situation of extreme suffering, reflected in psalms 22 and 69, in which the figure of the suffering Messiah³⁶ can be recognised, is based on the gospel as a whole and the mystery of Jesus’ life as a whole, and fits in with the solemnity of the end of Jesus’ life and the fulfilment of Scripture as a whole (as in I Cor.15:3-4). This interpretation agrees well with this air of final majestic conclusion, Jesus recognising in a paradoxical way the total accomplishment of his messianic enterprise as beloved Son of the Father in the instant before he dies. So it will be helpful to see the fulfilment of which he speaks in connection with the scenes before and after. In the scene before (Jn.19:25-27) the Church, represented by the Mother of Jesus and the beloved disciple, has been

³⁴ I follow in a free way I.DE LA POTTERIE, *Cuore trafitto*, 17-39 (La sete de Gesù morente’)

³⁵ I part company with the Jerusalem Bible translation, which reads ‘all is fulfilled.’ The Greek text of NESTLE-ALAND (eds.), *Greek-English New Testament*, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart, 1994, which reproduces the Greek text in the 27th critical edition of Nestle-Aland, does not include ‘all’ either in the text or in the critical apparatus. I follow the version agreed on unanimously in their respective commentaries by R.E.BROWN, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 2 vols., Doubleday, New York 1966-1970; R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Das Johannesevangelium* 4 vols. Herder, Freiburg 1965-1984; and X.LÉON-DUFOUR, *Lecture de l’Évangile selon Jean*, 4 vols., Seuil, Paris 1986-1996

³⁶ H. RAHNER, ‘Ideas para una fundamentación bíblica de la devoción al corazón de Jesús’, in *Cor salvatoris*, 53-81, 67-70, understands the psalms as a prophetic portrait of the Messiah’s heart: My heart has turned to wax, it has melted away within me’ (Ps.22:14); ‘Scorn has broken my heart and has left me helpless’ (Ps.69:20), ‘May your hearts live forever! All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord.’ (Ps.22: 26-27)

established; the following scene (19:31-37), the piercing, relates the pouring out of blood and water from the side of Jesus. So, then, the fulfilment referred to is that of the messianic work of the Only-begotten Son: the formation of the Church and the gift of the Spirit to all believers, the having brought to conclusion, to consummation, the messianic task given by the Father, who sent his Son into the world to give it life (Jn.3:16), to pour out the Spirit of life.

In this way the thirst of Jesus, his most profound longing, the desire of his heart, is the filial accomplishment of the will of the Father of mercies, consummating his life and work in obedience unto death (Heb.5:9; 2:10; Phil.2:8), sealing his life with the Pasch (Lk.22:15). In the final moment of his exaltation on the cross, just before giving up his spirit, which also certainly alludes to the gift of the Spirit. Jesus has satisfied the thirst of his heart: the commitment of love to the end (Jn.13:1) for the life of the world. (Jn.6:51). This is the paradoxical thirst of Jesus, which reveals to us the depths of his filial heart, surrendered for us and for our salvation. So it is not strange that St. Augustine should have wanted to underline this thirst in other passages: thus, in the magnificent scene of Jesus with the Samaritan woman, Augustine reveals a Jesus who asks for a drink from the woman, but is really thirsting for her faith.³⁷ Benedict XVI in his Lenten message for 2007 (13.02.07), entitled *They will look on the one whom they have pierced*, perceives that 'On the Cross God himself begs the love of his creature. He is *thirsty*³⁸ for the love of each one of us.'

b) The heart of Jesus, source of living water.

There is a correlation, emphasised by all the studies that we have consulted, between three scenes which I shall go on to consider in a summary way.

1. First scene: *The Samaritan woman*. Following the gospel order, I shall begin with Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman in such a significant place as Jacob's well. Meetings at wells in the OT are full of resonances of life and salvation (Gen.21:14-19; cf. Jn.5:1-18) and weddings (Gen.24:1-27; 29:1-6; Rx.2:11-22) which lead us to the understanding of the new heart of the new covenant, highlighted by Ezekiel (36:25).

The fundamental landmarks are clear in the text. In the dialogue, Jesus reveals his desire to give drink, to offer God's gift: 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.'(Jn.4:10). What is this gift? Jesus explains it in this way, according to the gospel: 'but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.' (4:14, cf. Is.58:11). Continuing the passage, later on in the same dialogue he speaks of true adoration of God, which will be in Spirit and in truth. (Jn.4:23-24). The Messiah's work will consist, precisely, in teaching true adoration of God. (Jn.4:25-26). If Jesus

³⁷ 'Ille autem qui bibere quaerebat, fidem ipsius mulieris sitiebat' (He, however, who was asking to drink, was thirsting for the woman's faith) (*Tract.in Joh.* 15:11; PL 35, 1514)

³⁸ My emphasis.

is the Messiah, then he is the one who is able to transmit true adoration in Spirit and in truth, two core aspects of John's gospel. How? The commentators agree in considering that in the dialogue with the Samaritan woman he is referring clearly to the gift of the Spirit, as a gift of the Messiah, as living water. The Spirit which Jesus is going to give is the water which will quench thirst forever. More, whoever receives the Spirit will convert his inner being, his heart, into a spring of living water. Thus, thanks to the gift of the Spirit, the same life as is in Jesus will be in those who receive his Spirit. Where does this gift come from?

Second scene, during the feast of Tabernacles (Jn.7:37-39). All the authors correlate this text with that of the Samaritan woman and the opened side, which we shall look at next. Furthermore, in the present liturgy of the solemnity of the Heart of Jesus it is taken as the first suggestion for the communion antiphon. Let us recall its literal tenor:

'On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and cried out in a loud voice³⁹, "If a man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him (*ek tei koiliai*)." By this he meant the Spirit whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.'

The last day of the feast might be the seventh, the predominant opinion, or the eighth. At all events it is interesting to note the solemnity of the moment which places us before a highly intentional declaration from Jesus, standing up and crying out, at a moment chosen very deliberately, always playing with the fundamental symbolism, so theologically powerful in John's gospel. The feast of Tabernacles recalls Israel's passage through the desert, in nomadic circumstances (Lev.23:43), without fixed abode. The ceremony accompanying the feast consisted in a procession which culminated in a ritual pouring on the altar of the Temple of water taken from the spring of Gihon, which fed the pool of Siloam. Thus the element of water (and light) impregnated the atmosphere of the feast.

Of greater interest⁴⁰ for us, the feast of Tabernacles is associated with the dedication of the temple (I Kings 8:2). This feast, in Jesus' time, was also interpreted according to Zac.9-14 : it was associated with the coming of the day of Yahweh; with the triumphal entry of a messianic king seated on an ass (Zac.9:9), at the moment in which Yahweh would pour a spirit of prayer and grace over the house of Israel (Zac.12:10), in which living waters would flow from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea (Zac.13:10), when finally all the enemies of Israel would be destroyed (Zac.14:16). At that time there would be no more traders in the temple (Zac.14:20-21). As can be seen, many themes resonate which appear in the Passion narratives. Zac. 9-14 was undoubtedly an enlightening text for the primitive community, which enabled them

³⁹ X. L ÉON-DUFOUR, op.cit., II,233 is of the opinion that it is better to read the verb in the imperfect, which gives continuity of the action in time: Jesus goes on crying out today.

⁴⁰ I am following R.E.BROWN, op.cit. I, 326-327

to understand the Messianic figure of Jesus.⁴¹ So, then, the choice of the feast of Tabernacles situates the scene in a clearly messianic context, with the open expectation of one sent by God who would be able to make rivers of living water burst out, so that the prophecy of Isaiah: 'With joy you will draw water from the springs of salvation' (Is.12:3, cf. Zac.12:10; 13:1), that the choir was singing while the priest was filling a golden ritual vessel with water from the spring, would be fulfilled. With all this, the feast points entirely to thirst and to the restoration of Israel, with very strong messianic resonances.

Among the interpreters there is discussion of the punctuation of verse 38: whether the one from whose breast flow rivers of living water is the believer, after he has drunk from Jesus as the primary source;⁴² or whether it refers expressly to Jesus himself as the one from whose breast flow the torrents of living water⁴³. There is no doubt that the primary and original source is Jesus himself, who is proclaimed as the source which gives drink. On the other hand the believer, participating in the Spirit of Jesus, having drunk from him, is converted, as we saw in the case of the Samaritan woman, into a new source of life. So, then, we can combine meanings, without needing to enter into the philological question.

There is still less need to enter into the complex discussion on whether 'breast' (*koilla*) is strictly equivalent to 'heart' (*kardia*), since we have already made it clear that in our approach we are playing with the closeness and equivalence of the symbols. The breast refers to the interiority and deep intimacy of the person and, in this understanding, in a way sufficiently close to what Scripture understands by heart.

Verse 39 supplies the theological reading of Jesus' declaration. The Spirit which Jesus will give in his glorification, in his exaltation on the cross, will be the one who will transform the believers in Jesus. The association of water and spirit is frequent in John's gospel. Further, in the wisdom literature water is a symbol of the life-giving law.

Third scene: the pierced side (Jn.19: 34-37). Our whole route leads towards this final scene, real Biblical centre of the theology of the heart of Jesus, which gathers up the previous developments and concludes them. Let us recall the text:

⁴¹ Cf. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *op.cit.*, IV, 164-173 ('Das Schriftcit in Joh.19:37')

⁴² X. L ÉON-DUFOUR, *op.cit.*, II, 235-237

⁴³ Especially H.RAHNER, *Flumina de ventre Christi*' followed by many others: I.DE LA POTTERIE, *Cuore trafitto*, 26; R.E.BROWN, *op.cit.* I,320-321; R. SCHNACKENBURG, *op.cit.* II,211-214. Without doubt H.Rahner has had a great influence on later interpretation of this text, thanks to his magnificent study. However, it gives me the impression that he associates the punctuation of these important manuscripts too much with the theology that Origen extracts from this punctuation. Still, it is possible to maintain the punctuation which her terms Alexandrian without necessarily adhering to Origen's interpretation of the text, which is of a somewhat gnosticising kind. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the alternative Ephesian punctuation and its correlative exegesis, of Asiatic stamp (Irenaeus, Hippolytus and others) possess an indubitable doctrinal richness, which should not be ignored.

'Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side (*pleuran enuxen*) with a spear, bringing a sudden flow (*exelthen*) of blood and water. The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled; *Not one of his bones will be broken* [Ex.12:46; Ps.34:21], and, as another scripture says, *They will look on the one whom they have pierced.* [Zac.12:10]'

The scene is very curious, because Jesus is already dead, having breathed out the Spirit (Jn.19:30). What interest prompts the evangelist to go on and tell what happens with Jesus' body? It is a simple inert, dead body. The gaze of faith continues to go even deeper if it comes to the meaning of Jesus' death, through the perception of the mystery of his body, inseparable from his person and his work. The meaning of the life, work and death of Jesus has already been manifested, but it will be completed in revealing the interiority of his body: a body whose bones have not been broken, as a true paschal lamb, and a body from which flow what has been the moving force of his whole life, water and blood. For scripture, blood represents life (Gen.9:3-6). So, then, the blood of Jesus which flows from his opened side is his life fully surrendered, to the very end, showing that all has been fulfilled, which now from on high is already drawing all to himself. (Jn.12:32; cf.8:28.) The water also bursts out⁴⁴, the Spirit which the Lord gives to his own, his better gift, thanks to which the disciples will continue their life in Christ, like Christ, towards the Father thanks to the strength of Christ's Spirit, to follow the actions of Jesus, which are those which glorify and please God.

The pierced side reveals the Lord's interior, specifically his heart, in both the literal and the figurative sense. What really interests us is the figurative sense, in which the greater theological weight is given. For that reason we shall not enter into physiological considerations of what kind of substance could flow from the open breast of the crucified Lord. With the disciple's gaze we understand that we are being given an opening to his most refined inner being: life poured out for the salvation of the world (blood) and Spirit given for the life of the world (water)⁴⁵.

The writer of the gospel has emphasised very much the importance of this moment, stressing the validity of the testimony by the one who testifies. Without entering into discussion whether the witness is the beloved disciple, mentioned in the previous scene, as seems most likely, it is significant that the whole life of Jesus is marked by the initial testimony of the Baptist,⁴⁶ who identifies him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn.1: 29, 37, cf. 1:15); and the final testimony, where he appears as the Lamb sacrificed, thus fulfilling the prophecy of the Baptist's testimony. The importance of such a solemn testimony, with a triple

⁴⁴ X. L ÉON-DUFOUR, op.cit.,IV,163, notes that the verb, *exelthen*, is the same as in Ezek.47:1

⁴⁵ Latterly the Fathers saw here a richness which there is no reason to undervalue: the blood would refer to the Eucharist and the water to baptism, the two major sacraments from which the Church is constituted. They also played with the parallelism between Adam's side, from which Eve was formed, and Christ's side, which gave birth to the Church. In the Middle Ages there were often representations in which the blood from the side was collected in a chalice..

⁴⁶ Cf. X. L ÉON-DUFOUR, op.cit.,IV,166

qualification, the only time in the whole gospel of John⁴⁷, is rooted in the fact that it is at the service of the believers' faith, so that they may understand the true particularity of Jesus.

Two quotations from scripture are particularly relevant for capturing the meaning of the scene. The first refers to the paschal Lamb, giving us to understand that Jesus is the true paschal Lamb sacrificed, who saves the people from their sins in a new Pasch. The second refers to the prophet Zechariah (12:10),⁴⁸ in a version some what modified from the Masoretic text, with an interpretation of a messianic kind. Having been pierced, Jesus shows himself as the true Messiah, whose death was prefigured in various OT texts. The figure of the Messiah is assimilated to that of the Servant of Yahweh who, surrendering his life to God for his brothers, manifests and reveals the mysterious love of God, which thanks to him, as its mediator, is poured out over the people:

'The Lord's Anointed has a heart completely submitted to God who sends him, a heart which sacrifices itself humbly and which unites in itself majestic anger, mortal desperation and jubilant joy. But all this authentic human life of his heart is at the service of messianic redemption, consisting in bestowing on the redeemed the living water of the Spirit, by means of the realisation of his sacrifice. Blood and water, heart and spirit, death and life, are inseparably united in this Old Testament Christology.'⁴⁹

The heart which comes close to God passes through the critical moment of sacrifice, surrendering life; paradoxically, from his death springs life, thanks to the pouring out of the Spirit, which flows from the broken heart.

Verse 37 takes up the prophecy of Zechariah 12:10. Evidently it is about a deep consideration of faith, through which faith is nourished and grows. That is, a consideration which includes the mystery of love and redemption which reflects the icon of the Lord's pierced side; a consideration which nourishes faith and love of the Lord, in recognising his life surrendered (blood) and his opened side turned into a fountain of our new life (water), of the Holy Spirit. So it can be thought, with good reason, that faith consists in knowing how to look.⁵⁰ In another way, different but congruent, the first letter of John (5:6-8) establishes a correlation between water, blood and the Spirit, as the three which bear witness to Jesus Christ and his Truth.

⁴⁷ I.DE LA POTTERIE, *Cuore trafitto*, 122

⁴⁸ Rev.1:7 also refers to this text. The exegetes consulted however, find other more marked nuances in the quotation from Zechariah in the Apocalypse. Cf., e.g., R. SCHNACKENBURG, op.cit., IV, 169-173

⁴⁹ H.RAHNER, 'Ideas para una fundamentación bíblica', 73, see 63-73

⁵⁰ 'Whoever prays begins to see; praying and seeing depend on one another, since – as Richard of St. Victor says – love is the eye.' (J.RATZINGER, *Miremos al Traspasado*, 30. The text of Richard of St. Victor: PL 196, 1203) In various of his writings Benedict XVI has insisted on knowing how to look; cf., e.g. J.RATZINGER, *Mirar a Cristo. Ejercicios de fe, esperanza y amor* [1989], Edicep. Valencia 2005, esp. 35-36.

There is no doubt, then, that Scripture, above all John's gospel, refer in a sufficiently clear way to the heart of Jesus as the source of living waters. These living waters symbolize the Holy Spirit, poured out in the hearts of the faithful (Gal.4:6; Rom.5:5, etc). The waters spring from the interior of Jesus, already formulated as his side (*pleura*: Jn.19:34) or his breast (*koilia*: Jn.7:38), if that verse refers to Jesus and not to the believer. In our approach it is enough for us to pay attention to the incontrovertible fact that it is referring to the interiority of Jesus, to the centre of his life, to his heart, in the Biblical sense of that term.

3. PERSPECTIVES

Having finished this attempt at laying a foundation, even though limited almost exclusively to a summary exegesis of the main Joannine texts, we can consider some of the perspectives that open up from this horizon. I am going to refer to two: to the human thirst, quenched by the gift of the Spirit, which inflames to love of the Lord Jesus with his own style of loving and, consequently, is opened to love of God and neighbour; and to some particular characteristics of the Christology of the Sacred Heart, of undoubted interest in the panorama of contemporary Christology.

3.1 HUMAN THIRST AND THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT, WHICH QUENCHES THIRST

a) Jesus and the thirst of the human heart.

The human heart is inhabited by thirst and desire. At the hour of seeking satisfaction multiple possibilities are presented to it, very different, going from love to hatred. To the human heart belongs the capacity to close itself up, to harden, to become arrogant, to shut itself in, to make itself stubborn, in Biblical terminology. In the heart dwell anger, pride, lust, sarcasm, egoism, vengeance and resentment. So each human heart has to discover what really quenches its deepest thirst, without deceiving it, without destroying it, without tyrannizing over it. The great question of human life is rooted in discovering to whom or to what it is worth surrendering the heart, because in becoming servant or slave to that, true liberty is attained. That is to say, in discovering who or what is worthy of being the authentic lord of our heart, to adore it or serve it with the whole heart, thus, paradoxically, achieving true liberty in the truth. (cf. Jn.8:32).

For that reason, Scripture is very much aware of the deception into which the heart may fall, insisting stubbornly on lies, impiety, falsehood. So we need to discern sensitively, on the one hand the genuine desires of the heart, those which spring from its authentic depths, those which are engraved deep within it to open out towards its truest end, those which spring from its soundest and truest depths; on the other hand, the traps, deceits, lies and meanness which may have lodged in our heart. Clearly, it is very probable that we need some external help, typically, in the Christian tradition, trust in spiritual direction from an experienced person. For that reason, on the other hand, Scripture also recognises insistently the need for circumcision of the heart, purification of it, putting it to rights with itself, with its

depths, its roots, so as to meet the original design of our heart, which cannot exist without a divine purpose, of realising the image of the Son. The human heart is truly fulfilled, quenches its thirst in reality, when it is configured to the heart of the Son (cf. GS 22).

Both movements converge in the gaze of faith on the pierced heart. In one way it implies the most obscene provocation: that in the shattered wreck, in the open and bleeding wound, in the ignominious death, the cross, the crown of thorns and the opened side, is rooted the unfolding of the truth of life, and that we are invited to become imitators and followers of his way.⁵¹ But one also suspects, as the good thief and the centurion recognised, as Pilate's doubts allow to be seen, as the hostility of the chief priests betrays when they know that they are denounced from within, the majesty of the truth of an authentic life, full of freedom, coherence and love. This speaks to us in harmony with the best in our hearts, which resonates in empathy with the courage of truth and love.

2. Our heart seeks, then, the place where it can find ultimate counsel and rest. Our society offers us economic and sexual success, as the gods which really answer our most authentic desires and the most radical thirst of our hearts. So initially it is difficult to believe that it can be in humility and gentleness that our heart finds rest, that it is reconciled with its truth, that it finds repose and its haven of peace. With words that come from his heart the Lord Jesus says to us:

'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden light.' (Mt.11:28-30)

The exegetes insist that these words have to be seen in comparison with the heavy yoke imposed by the observances extolled by the Pharisees. However, given the ongoing contemporary reality of God's Word, we cannot reduce it without further argument to this specific historical moment. Today's Pharisees are seated in the great media pulpit of consumerism and publicity, from which they preach thousands of prescriptions for gaining happiness sold at a high price:⁵² fabulous cars, luxury houses, dream cottages, permanently new sensations, sensual caresses, gratifying erotic relationships, economic status which grants every caprice, journeys to paradise, irresistible powers of sexual attraction, ceaselessly stimulating the sensuality of always unsatisfied desire. What it offers is endless and inaccessible. Our society itself functions thanks to the economic train of consumerism, which

⁵¹ This line is typical of the theology of H.U. VON BALTHASAR and collected in, for example his book *I cuore del mondo*: Jaca Book, Milano 2006. For a theological argument, cf. A.COROVILLA, "'Gracia sobre gracia', El hombre a la luz del misterio encarnado" in G.URIBARRI (ed.), *Teología y nueva evangelización*, Desclée – U.P.Comillas, Bilbao-Madrid 2005, 97-143, esp. 136-142

⁵² Cf. R. APARICIO – J.BENAVIDES- J. GARCÍA – A.TORNOS, *La publicidad: la nueva cultura del deseo e interpelación a la fe*: MCom.47 (1989) 495-546; X. QUINZÁ, *La cultura del deseo y la seducción de Dios* (Cuadernos FyS 24), Instituto Fe y Secularidad – Sal Terrae, Madrid – Santander, 1993; ID, 'El deseo como semiótica de la salvación, in Instituto Fe y Secularidad, *Memoria Académica 1994-1995*, Madrid 1995, 145-164

enrols us in a tremendously competitive dynamic, continuously stressful, always overloaded, accelerating and constant. So it is not surprising that cures for stress should be a lucrative business, nor that multinational pharmaceuticals should get rich by producing stimulants and antidepressants. In this context what Jesus proposes is really provocative, prophetic, and, furthermore, hits the nail on the head. As much as our society would like to give it the cold shoulder, taken up in the frenzy of competence, repose of heart begins by humble acceptance, by situating itself in its own truth, by the gentleness of recognising its own poverty, without complications, by purifying the unbridled desire for self-affirmation and dominance.

Humility and gentleness is the road which purifies the heart, which heals its wounds, reconciles it with its own reality, brings it to encounter with itself, allows real thirst to spring up, without additives or toxins or any other form of adulteration. We need – and how much! – to be reached by the blessedness of gentleness (Mt.5:4), and purity of heart (Mt.5:8), for our heart to open to the reality of its own thirst and seek the torrent in which it can really be quenched: in the fountain of living water.

b) The heart of Jesus incardinate us into the heart of God.

Even if Trinitarian theology has not been uppermost in the most classical devotion⁵³ to the heart of Jesus, there is no doubt that it represents its ultimate key and most radical substance. The Son has revealed to us the Father's heart, and has enabled us to share in the love of the Trinity, to unfold a Christian existence poured into the love of the Trinity, which is at one and the same time the dynamic of reciprocal love between the persons of the Trinity and love of the world, which proceeds from loving design and is always in its care. Thus, configured to the heart of the Son, as Christians we are enabled to pulsate with this Trinitarian love in the unity of the love of Jesus Christ, gateway to the Trinity and to love of neighbour.

The Son springs from the Father's love, from his innermost being, his deepest reality, his own substance, the depths of his heart. Tertullian says in a creative way, referring to the procession of the Word: 'the Son was made the first-born, since he was engendered before all things, and only-begotten, since he is the only one engendered by God, from the depths of his very own heart, as the Father himself attests: 'my heart utters the best of words' (Ps.44:2)⁵⁴. The Son, who proceeds from the Father's heart, is united with the Father as the eternal Word. (Jn.1:1-2). This Son, in being made flesh of the Virgin Mary, by the work of the Holy Spirit, took a human heart. In his earthly history the Son's heart, nourished by the Father's will, (Jn.4:34), constantly revealed the Father's face, making known the depths of God. He, the incarnate Son, who is turned towards the Father's breast (*kolpon*) (Jn.1:18) can speak of it and make it understood.⁵⁵

⁵³ Cf. R. GUTZWILLER, 'Dificultades', 40-41

⁵⁴ Tertullian, Adv.Prax. 7,1

⁵⁵ I.DE LA POTTERIE, *Cuore trafitto*, 48-49

Thus the beloved disciple, as figure of the believer, reclined on the Lord's breast (*stethos*: Jn.13:25; 21:20), following the same line of heart-to-heart knowledge. The Son proceeds from the Father's heart, and so, permanently nourished by this knowledge, can in turn reveal it and make it known. The disciple who hopes to gain knowledge of the Lord, above all interior knowledge of the Lord, reclines on his breast to receive the wisdom of his heart, and is shaped by this knowledge, inflamed by the love springing from this heart, to live from this love, convey it to the world and shape history according to the designs of this heart.

This wisdom of the Lord Jesus' heart, which communicates the beat of the Father's heart to those who know how to hear and to listen, is made accessible to all graces in the greater gift of his heart: the Spirit. For the Spirit is poured out when his heart is broken open, revealing and communicating all the love which fills it. So the Christian, the disciple who loves, now has access to the heart of God, thanks to the heart of Jesus,⁵⁶ to the Holy Spirit of God,⁵⁷ transmitted by the heart of the Son in the communication of his Trinitarian love, the Father's love for the world, (cf.Jn.3:16), gift of the pierced heart.⁵⁸

The life of the Christian is shaped by the Spirit, as recognition of God's love in Jesus Christ (Rom.5:8). In fact the whole of Christian life takes place in Christ and in the Spirit. Thanks to the Spirit we can cry out as adopted children *Abba*, Father (Gal.4:6); Rom.8:15), since the Spirit has been poured out in our hearts (Rom.5:5) Now our heart, consumed by the fire of the Spirit, (cf. Phil.2:1; Col.3:12) and marked his seal (2Cor.1:22; Eph.1:13), lives in the Spirit, from whom springs love of God and of our brothers and sisters (Phil.1:8), from whom springs configuration with Christ and the loving recognition of the Lord (1Jn.4:3). Love of the Lord is above all confession of his love (Gal.2:20), from the thanksgiving of the heart which knows that love is only repaid by love. And so the Christian is rooted in love so as to love more, to love and serve in all things⁵⁹. Finally, Christian life can be described in these beautiful words of the writer of the letter to the Ephesians,⁶⁰ in which he gives free rein to the deepest feelings of his apostolic heart:

'For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may

⁵⁶ Cf. L.LADARIA, *Humanidad de Cristo y don del Espíritu*: EE 51 (1976), 321-345; id. *Cristología del Logos y cristología del Espíritu*: Gr.61 (1980)353-60; id. *La unción de Jesús y el don del Espíritu*: Gr.71(1990) 547-71; id. 'El bautismo y la unción de Jesús', in id. *El Dios vivo y verdadero. El misterio de la Trinidad*, Secretariado Trinitario, Salamanca 1998, 59-72; id. 'El Espíritu del Padre y del Hijo' in id. *La Trinidad, misterio de comunión*, Salamanca, Secretariado Trinitario, 2002, 173-236

⁵⁷ Cf. S.ZEDDA, 'Dos series de textos paulinos para el estudio de las relaciones entre el Sagrado Corazón y el Espíritu santo' in *Cor Christi*, 469-475; H.HOLSTEIN, 'El Corazón de Cristo y el Espíritu santo', in *ibid.*,476-481; G.LEBLOND, 'El Corazón de Cristo y el Espíritu Santo' in *ibid.*,482-498; J.SOLANO, 'El culto al Corazón de Jesús y el Espíritu santo', in *ibid.* 499-546

⁵⁸ Cf. PIUS XII, HA, 1 and 2

⁵⁹ IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, *Spiritual Exercises*, 233

⁶⁰ Fr. Arrupe's last great letter to the Society was entitled precisely *Rooted and grounded in love* (6.02.1981). In P.ARRUPE, *La Iglesia de hoy y del futuro*, Mensajero – Sal Terrae, Bilbao-Santander 1982, 727-765

dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.’ (Eph.3:14-19).

As may be appreciated, this text is of a clearly Trinitarian stamp. The pierced heart of Jesus has been what has allowed and enabled us to look on and discern the breadth and length, the height and depth of God’s love and of his own heart. Not only this, but by the action of the Spirit we are allowed to be ‘rooted and established’, settled and grounded, to dwell within the loving dynamic of God’s heart. In this way the human heart satisfies its thirst to the full, is divinised, is converted into interpreter and instrument of the love of God’s heart, is made fully like Christ and, being like Christ, is made truly human, being filled with the fullness of God. Before this open heart and his thirst to give us his love, so that we may reach our own fullness, the only fitting response is to open our own heart to him and commit ourselves to him, that he may dispose us to his entire will.⁶¹

3.2 COROLLARIES: CONTEMPORARY REALITY OF SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHRISTOLOGY OF THE HEART OF JESUS.

The theology of the heart of Jesus presents in itself an enormous richness of registers. Not for nothing has it been said that in the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus there is heaped up ‘a real saturation of strength’,⁶² expounded by the pontiffs in their various encyclicals and demonstrated throughout a whole history of sanctity, of deep mysticism and apostolic fruitfulness. Some of these aspects which are concentrated in the devotion to the heart of Jesus and in subsequent theology seem to me especially relevant for contemporary Christology. I shall go on simply to list them briefly.

a) ‘Teleological’ Christology, or Christology of the relevance of the historical journey of Jesus

First, contrary to what might appear, the Christology of the Sacred Heart gives a high profile to the historical unfolding of the humanity of Jesus, of his personal story. For it shows that the love of his heart was displayed through his whole existence, although in tension towards the heart’s final surrender at the culminating moment of the Cross, in the glorification and in the ultimate hour, according to John.

I have highlighted Jesus’ thirst, which continued until its final consummation in the perfect obedience of the final surrender. Now this dynamic implies that neither was everything in fact fully contained in the Incarnation itself, nor is everything reduced

⁶¹ IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, *Spiritual Exercises*, 234

⁶² J. STIERLI, Valores dogmáticos y religiosos de la devoción al corazón de Jesús’ in *Cor salvatoris*, 301-324,302

to the supreme moment of the cross. Certainly the Incarnation possesses in itself the initial dynamism which contains in nucleus what will be fulfilled later. But the fulfilment is brought about through a history of obedience, fidelity, continuing revelation of the face of God, through preaching of the breaking in of the Kingdom of God, good news especially for the poor, parables, meals with sinners, the call to follow, miracles, conflicts with the Jewish and Roman authorities, silent prayer, missionary journeying, teaching, new and provocative behaviour concerning the observance of the Law (the Sabbath) and the meaning of the Temple, and so on. In this way one of the major themes of contemporary Christology, the specific human history of Jesus of Nazareth, as something which possesses substantial theological weight, is perfectly enclosed in the dynamic of revelation. Jesus shows that he is the Son through his history and his comportment as Son. Being Son, his filiation is consummated (*teleosis*) and perfected through his history. So in John everything tends towards his hour, as we have seen through his thirst for fulfilment. This perspective is not alien to the Letter to the Hebrews⁶³ (2:10; 5:9; 12:2) and allows for a theologically complex reading of the history of Jesus, which without minimising the importance of the historical course of his life and its content, allows a connection to be established between the Christology from above - Jesus is the Incarnate Son; and that from below - in the specific history of Jesus it is revealed that he is the Son and that he attains authentic sonship through the Pasch, being constituted Son in the Resurrection (cf. Rom.1:3-4). I call development of this kind *teleological*: the consummation, revelation and realisation of the filiation through history⁶⁴.

From this perspective, furthermore, the humanity of Jesus, so much accentuated by devotion to the heart of Jesus, is perfectly described at every moment.⁶⁵ It is real humanity, which unfolds through a real history of freedom and with full human free will. However, this history, freedom and free will are always defined as those proper to the Son of God, to the Incarnate Word.⁶⁶ In such a way that without losing anything of substance as personal history, and of a specific man, Jesus of Nazareth, it is at the same time the history intrinsically qualified as capable of making known the heart of God himself. In this way Christology avoids a consideration of the humanity of Jesus as simply that of one more human being, even if especially gifted, prophetic, close to God, pleasing to God.⁶⁷ Some Christological perspectives which

⁶³ Cf., esp., A.VANHOYE, *La 'Teleiosis' du Christ: Point capital de la christologie sacerdotale d'hébreux*: NTS 42 (1996) 321-338; id., *La lettre aux hébreux*, Jésus-Christ, médiateur d'une nouvelle alliance, Desclée, Paris 2002

⁶⁴ G.URIBARRI, *El dinamismo encarnatorio según las homilias catequéticas de Teodoro de Mopsuestia*: EE 81 (2006) 37-95, esp. 89-90. Cf. P.HÜNERMANN, 'Gottes Sohn in der Zeit, Entwurf eines Begriffs', in L. SCHEFFCZYK (Hg.), *Grundfragen der Christologie heute* (QD72), Herder, Freiburg, 1975, 114-140

⁶⁵ E.g. K.RAHNER, 'Eterna significación de la humanidad de Cristo para nuestra relación con Dios', in id., *Escritos de Teología III*, Taurus, Madrid 1968, 47-59

⁶⁶ Cf. .PIUS XII, *HA*, 11-12

⁶⁷ This deficit is seen clearly, for example, in the Christology of H. KÜNG, *Ser cristiano*, Cristiandad, Madrid, 1977; id., 20 tesis sobre ser cristiano, Cristiandad, Madrid, 1977. For a well-founded critique: A. GRILLMEIER, *Die Einzigartigkeit Jesus Christi und unser Christsein*. Zu Hans Kung, *Christ sein*: ThPh 51 (1976) 196-243 (now also in id., *Fragmente zur Christologie*, Herder, Freiburg 1977, 33-80; id. 'Jesus von Nazaret: im Schatten des Gottessohnes?' in H. U. VON BALTHASAR and others, *Diskussion über Hans Küngs "Christ Sein"*, Matthias Grünewald, Mainz, 1876, 60-82

consider the history of Jesus 'from below' have remained trapped in a Jesus truly human, and incapable of showing how the presence of transcendence combines in his person. In this there is no way of formulating without doubt a central element of Christological faith: God loves us with a human heart.⁶⁸

b) Pneumatic Christology.

The Christology which accompanies the theology and devotion of the Sacred Heart is not only Trinitarian but also pneumatic.⁶⁹ If one of the desiderata of present-day Christology is a better combination of Christology and pneumatology, to overcome the limitations of the Chalcedonian formula, which does not give relevance to pneumatology, there is no doubt that this articulation of the theology of the Sacred Heart is well-presented; moreover, it forms one of its clear core elements.

This allows Christology to relate easily to various substantial elements in Christian life. Of course with anthropology, as I have suggested briefly, with man justified and changed into an adopted son by the gift of the Spirit; but also with the Church, which springs from the side of Christ like a new Eve; and with the greater sacraments, baptism and the Eucharist, symbolised respectively, according to the Fathers, by the water and the blood that flow from his side. In this way Christology opens the horizon to a wider panorama of Christian life, which includes relationship with the Trinity, the life of grace, the sacraments and the liturgy, membership of the Church and, of course, practical commitment to charity and the apostolate.

c) Spiritual Christology.

Through all the qualities just mentioned, in the Christology of the Sacred Heart there is not the divorce which is so reviled between theology and spirituality, between theological science and lived holiness,⁷⁰ between academic theology and preaching, between mystical prayer and practical life. It is a Christology at once dogmatic, Biblical and spiritual, something very much needed in our time.⁷¹

⁶⁸ On this issue: cf. J.RATZINGER, *Miremos al Traspasado*; id. *Un canto nuevo para el Señor*, Sigueme, Salamanca 1999 (orig.1995), 18-19 and 32-35; M Schneider, *Teología como biografía, Una fundamentación dogmática*, Desclée, Bilbao 2000, 37-8; R.F.TAFT, in V. GOMEZ-OLIVER and J.M. BENÍTEZ, *31 Jesuitas se confiesan*, Península, Barcelona 2003, 264-5; W. KASPER, "Einer aus der Trinität"...Zur Neubegründung einer spirituellen Christologie in trinitätstheologische Perspektive", in id. *Theologie und Kirche*, Matthias Grünewald, Mainz 1987, 217-234,228; G.URIBARRI, *La singular humanidad de Jesucristo*

⁶⁹ See note 56

⁷⁰ Cf. H.U. VON BALTHASAR, 'Theologie und heiligkeit' in id. *Skizzen zur Theologie*. I. Verbum Caro, Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln 1960, 195-225.

⁷¹ Cf. J.RATZINGER, 'Puntos de referencia cristológicos', in id., *Miremos al Traspasado*, 11-57