

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Building a Civilization of Love: Consecration of the Family and the Home To the Sacred Heart of Jesus

by His Eminence Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke, D.D., J.C.D.

Introduction

As a newly-ordained priest in 1975, one of my most striking impressions was the loss of devotional life in Catholic homes. During my first years of priestly life, I recall visiting homes of families of the parish and of the Catholic high-school at which I was teaching, and often being struck by the absence of those usual objects of devotion, like the crucifix or an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus or of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Absent, too, I discovered in many families were the devotional practices like the Morning Offering and the Family Rosary.

In a certain sense, I was not surprised, for I had experienced in my seminary formation, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, a strong element of that false but nonetheless pervasive interpretation of the teaching of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, which discredited all forms of devotion as somehow opposed to the Sacred Liturgy and detracting from a full and active participation in the Sacred Liturgy. In many of the parishes with which I was acquainted in those years, many or all of the traditional parish devotions, like Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament, Processions with the Blessed Sacrament and Rosary Processions, and the Mother of Perpetual Help or Sorrowful Mother Novenas had been discontinued.

For two reasons, at least, I, as a priest, was deeply concerned with the decline of the devotional life in the home and in the parish. First of all, I knew, without any doubt, that the

devotional life had contributed greatly to my own faith and practice of the faith. I knew well that the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in my home, the praying of the Family Rosary, the May Altar, and participation in the Sorrowful Mother Novena at our parish church had not only not lessened my love of the Sacraments, above all, the Holy Eucharist, but had contributed to a lively and strong consciousness of how sacred the sacramental encounters with our Lord truly are. I grew up in a home and in a parish with a rich and varied devotional life which fostered in me a strong sense of the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in my life, of my communion with the Saints and with the souls in Purgatory, and of the Sacred Liturgy as “the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed and, at the same time, the fount from which all her power flows.”¹

Certainly, I understand that there were exaggerations and even doctrinal deviations in some devotional practices. Such, it seems to me, will always be the case, as long as frail human beings are the ones practicing the devotions. At the same time, when the Church encourages, directs and disciplines the devotional life, it is an irreplaceable means of remaining in the presence of our Lord, encountered in the Sacred Liturgy, throughout the day. I think, for example, of the practice of the Morning Offering, Spiritual Communion, and visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

Blessed John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, “On the Most Holy Rosary,” referring to the teaching of his

¹ “culmen ad quod actio Ecclesiae tendit et simul fons unde omnis eius virtus emanat.” Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, Constitutio *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, “de sacra Liturgia,” 4 Decembris 1963, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 2 (1964), p. 102, no. 10. English translation: *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P., Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1975, p. 6.

predecessor, Pope Paul VI, addressed directly the false understanding of the Second Vatican Council, which opposes its emphasis on full and active participation in the Sacred Liturgy to the devotional life, specifically the Rosary devotion. He declared:

There are some who think that the centrality of the Liturgy, rightly stressed by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, necessarily entails giving lesser importance to the Rosary. Yet, as Pope Paul VI made clear, not only does this prayer not conflict with the Liturgy, *it sustains it*, since it serves as an excellent introduction and a faithful echo of the Liturgy, enabling people to participate fully and interiorly in it and to reap its fruits in their daily lives.²

The devotional life is inspired by the mysteries of the faith encountered directly in the Sacred Liturgy, and keeps those mysteries before our eyes throughout the day.

For example, Father John Croiset, the last spiritual director of Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque before her death, writes about the nature of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in these words:

The particular object of this devotion is the immense love of the Son of God, which induced Him to deliver Himself up to death for us and to give Himself entirely to us in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. . . . The end which is proposed is, firstly, to recognize and honour as much as lies in our power, by our frequent adoration, by a return

of love, by our acts of thanksgiving and by every kind of homage, all the sentiments of tender love which Jesus Christ has for us in the adorable Sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist, where, however, He is so little known by men, or at least so little loved even by those people who know Him; . . .³

Corollary to the knowledge and love of the Holy Eucharist, fostered by the Sacred Heart devotion, is the practice of reparation for the offenses committed against our Lord during His earthly ministry and His Real Presence in the Most Blessed Sacrament.⁴

Secondly, I could not help but note the loss of Catholic faith during the years following the Second Ecumenical Council, those years during which the devotional life was abandoned. It did not take an unusual priestly sensitivity to note the ever-decreasing participation in Sunday Mass by families, for instance, whose children were enrolled in the Catholic School. The loss of belief in the Real Presence was also manifest, along with a loss of the sense of the irreplaceable service of the ordained priest in the Body of Christ. Granted that other factors like a gravely defective catechesis contributed to the loss of faith, the lack of a devotional life left children and young people especially devoid of a concrete way to perceive the Catholic faith and to express the Catholic faith.

With regard to the loss of Catholic faith, I cannot fail to mention the clear and strong concern of Blessed Pope John Paul II, in the final years of his service as Successor of Saint Peter, to restore faith in the Holy Eucharist. In his concern,

² “Sunt qui putent primarium Liturgiae locum, merito quidem a Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II laudatum, secum necessario deminutum importare Rosarii momentum. Verumtamen, quemadmodum Paulus VI explanavit, haec oratio non modo se Liturgiae Sacrae non opponit sed *illi etiam tamquam fulcrum deservit*, quandoquidem introducit eam atque repetit dum plena interior participatione permittit ut ea vivatur eiusque percipiantur cotidiana in vita fructus.” Ioannis Pauli PP. II, Epistula Apostolica *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, “de Mariali Rosario,” 16 Octobris 2002, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 1 (2003), p. 8, no. 4. English translation: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

³John Croiset, S.J., *The Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, tr. Patrick O’Connell, St. Paul, Minnesota: The Radio Replies Press Society, 1959, pp. 43-44 [Hereafter, *The Devotion to the Sacred Heart*].

⁴ Cf. *Ibid*, p. 44.

manifested in his last Encyclical Letter, in an Instruction of the Congregation for Sacred Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, which was ordered and approved by him; in the indiction of the Year of the Holy Eucharist; and in the calling of the Synod of Bishops to consider Eucharistic faith and practice, Blessed Pope John Paul II urged insistently a return to Eucharistic faith and devotion. His words regarding Eucharistic devotion, which make reference to the essential relationship of Eucharistic devotion and devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, are very striking:

It is pleasant to spend time with Him, to lie close to His breast like the Beloved Disciple (cf. *Jn* 13:25) and to feel the infinite love present in His Heart. If in our time Christians must be distinguished above all by the “art of prayer,” how can we not feel a renewed need to spend time in spiritual converse, in silent adoration, in heartfelt love before Christ present in the Most Holy Sacrament? How often, dear brothers and sisters, have I experienced this, and drawn from it strength, consolation and support!⁵

The devotional life, as Blessed John Paul II expresses so well, is our response of love to the unceasing and immeasurable outpouring of God’s love into our souls from the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus. When the devotional life is not fostered or is even discouraged, love of our Lord and of His Presence with us in the Church, above all, in the Holy Eucharist, naturally grows cold. On the

other hand, true Eucharistic faith must express itself in devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament and in other devotions.

Having reflected on the stark contrast between the devotional life of my childhood and early youth, and the loss of the devotional life in families and parishes in the decades following upon the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, I hasten to add that, over the past years, I note a strong hunger for the devotional life among young people, as unfamiliar with it as they have been left. Also, I find among the faithful of around my age a kind of rediscovery of the devotional life and a certain wonderment about why it was ever abandoned.

I begin my reflection on Building the Civilization of Love, which our Lord calls us to develop and cultivate in society, with these reflections, so that we may all be realistic about the actual situation and about the critical role which the devotional life, above all, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, has in the fulfillment of our mission of developing and cultivating the Civilization of Love.

Civilization of Love and the New Evangelization

What do we mean when we say that we are called to build the Civilization of Love in our time? The meaning of our mission is best understood in terms of the New Evangelization, which is the way of the development and promotion of the Civilization of Love.

Blessed John Paul II described the mission of the Church in our day with the words, “the New Evangelization.” He recognized that the Church

⁵ “Pulchrum est versari cum Eo et, morando super pectus eius more discipuli praedilecti (cfr *Io* 13, 25), affici infinito cordis eius amore. Si eminere debet nostris diebus christiana religio, praesertim ob «artem precandi», quis non renovatam necessitatem percipit diutius deversandi spiritali in colloquio, tacita in adoratione, amanti in habitu ante Christum in Sanctissimo Sacramento praesentem? Quotiens, cari fratres ac sorores, hoc idem sumus experti indeque vires et consolationem et sustentationem sumus consecuti!” Ioannis Pauli PP. II, Litterae Encyclicae *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, “de Eucharistia eiusque necessitudine cum Ecclesia,” 17 Aprilis 2003, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 7 (2003), p. 450, no. 25. English translation: Libreria Editrice Vaticana [Hereafter: *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*].

in our time is called and sent to carry out her mission in a very challenging societal and cultural context. In his Spiritual Testament, Blessed John Paul II described our times as “unspeakably difficult and disturbing.”⁶ He wrote these words during his annual Lenten retreat in 1980, early in his pontificate.

Great Shepherd of the Universal Church, Blessed John Paul II, never ceased to ponder in his heart the deepest needs of all mankind, the agonizing spiritual needs of the sons and daughters of God, who live in a world which has lost the sense of its origin in God and its final destiny in Him. Blessed John Paul II was profoundly conscious of the urgent need for all who are alive in Christ in the Church to teach and live the Gospel with the newness of the first disciples for the sake of the salvation of the world, that is, in order that Christ may feed the deep spiritual hunger of a godless culture. With his predecessor, Pope Paul VI, he called upon all in the Church to transform what has become a “culture of death” into a civilization of divine life and love.⁷

In his teaching during the over twenty-six years of his service as the Vicar of Christ on earth,

Blessed John Paul II insistently urged us all, according to our vocation in life and our particular personal gifts, to take up the work of the New Evangelization and so to build the Civilization of Love. In his Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, “On the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World,” he described what he called the “hard test” which living the Catholic faith is today, in a practically atheistic world, in a culture radically marked by secularism:

Whole countries and nations where religion and the Christian life were formerly flourishing and capable of fostering a viable and working community of faith, are now put to a hard test, and in some cases, are even undergoing a radical transformation, as a result of a constant spreading of an indifference to religion, of secularism and atheism. This particularly concerns countries and nations of the so-called First World, in which economic well-being and consumerism, even if coexistent with a tragic situation of poverty and misery, inspires and sustains a life lived “as if God did not exist”. This

⁶ “Czasy, w których żyjemy, są niewymownie trudne i niespokojne.” Ioannis Pauli PP. II, *Ioannis Pauli II Testamentum*, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis Supplementum* (2005) p. 477. English translation: “The Testament of John Paul II,” *L’Osservatore Romano Weekly Edition in English*, 13 April 2005, p. 4.

⁷ Cf. Paulus VI, “La civiltà dell’amore prevarrà nell’affanno delle implacabili lotte sociali,” 25 Decembris 1975 (Close of the Holy Year), in *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, Vol. XIII (1975), p. 1568. English translation: *L’Osservatore Romano Weekly Edition in English*, 1 January 1976, p. 12; Ioannis Pauli PP. II, Litterae Encyclicae *Dives in Misericordia*, “de divina misericordia,” 30 Novembris 1980, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 9 (1980), pp. 1224-1225, no. 14. English translation: Libreria Editrice Vaticana; and Ioannis Pauli PP. II, Litterae Encyclicae *Evangelium Vitae*, “de vitae humanae inviolabili bono,” 25 Martii 1995, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 5 (1995), pp. 509-510, no. 95. English translation: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

indifference to religion and the practice of religion devoid of true meaning in the face of life's very serious problems, are not less worrying and upsetting when compared with declared atheism.⁸

Our late and most beloved Holy Father describes a kind of atheism in practice, lived by many today in countries and cultures, like our own, which were once strongly Christian and may still consider themselves so.

Before the challenges of living the Catholic faith in our time, Blessed John Paul II recalled the urgency of Christ's mandate given to the first disciples and given to us today:

Certainly the command of Jesus: "Go and preach the Gospel" always maintains its vital value and its everpressing obligation. Nevertheless, the *present situation*, not only of the world but also of many parts of the Church, *absolutely demands that the word of Christ receive a more ready and generous obedience*. Every disciple is personally called by name; no disciple can withhold making a response: "Woe to me, if I do not preach the Gospel" (1 Cor 9:16).⁹

The "*present situation*" of the world and the Church "*absolutely demands that the word of Christ receive a more ready and generous obedience*." The obedience which is fundamental to the New Evangelization is also a virtue acquired with difficulty in a culture which exalts individualism and questions all authority. Yet, it is indispensable, if the Gospel is to be taught and lived in our time. We must take our example from the first disciples, from the first missionaries to the various parts of the world, and from the host of saints and blessed who gave themselves completely to Christ, calling upon the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit to purify themselves of any rebellion before God's will and to strengthen them to do God's will in all things.

Blessed John Paul II addressed the same challenge in his Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, "On the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day."¹⁰ He also addressed the pressing need of the New Evangelization in his Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, "On the Consecrated Life and Its Mission in the Church and in the World."¹¹ With a particular insistence, Blessed John Paul II addressed the call

⁸ "Integrae regionis nec non nationes in quibus anteacto tempore religio et vita christiana florebant, quae vivacis ac operosae fidei communitates excitabant, nunc rebus adversis premuntur ac non raro radicitus sunt transformatae, gliscentibus indifferentismo, saecularismo et atheismo. Agitur praesertim de regionibus et nationibus «Primi Mundi» qui dicitur, in quibus oeconomica prosperitas et consumendarum rerum cupiditas, quamquam etiam terribilibus paupertatis et miseriae adiunctis commixtae, inhiant ac proclamant ita esse vivendum «etsi Deus non daretur». At religiosa indifferentia et practica Dei completa neglegentia ad vitae quaestiones licet graviore exsolvendae non minus affligunt animum nec minus videntur evertentes quam problematus atheismus..." Ioannis Pauli PP. II, Adhortatio Apostolica Post-Synodalis, *Christifidelis Laici*, "de vocatione et missione Laicorum in Ecclesia et in mundo," 30 Decembris 1988, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 4 (1989), p. 454, no. 34. English translation: Libreria Vaticana Editrice.

⁹ "Equidem mandatum Iesu: «Euntes praedicate evangelium» sua vi perpetuo viget ac inoccidue urget; verumtamen *praesens rerum conditio*, non solum in mundo sed in pluribus quoque Ecclesiae partibus, *omnino requirit ut Christi verbo promptius ac magis dilatato corde obtemperetur*; quivis discipulus ita in sua ipsius persona interpellatur, ut nullus se in proprio responso eliciendo retrahere possit: «Vae enim mihi est, si non evangelizavero!» (1 Cor 9,16) *Ibid*, p. 454, no. 33.

¹⁰ Ioannis Pauli PP. II, Adhortatio Apostolica Postsynodalis *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, "de Sacerdotum formatione in aetatis nostrae rerum condicione," 25 Martii 1992, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 8 (1992). English translation: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

¹¹ Ioannis Pauli PP. II, Adhortatio Apostolica Post-Synodalis *Vita Consecrata*, "de vita consecrata eiusque missione in Ecclesia ac mundo," 25 Martii 1996, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 5 (1996). English translation: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

of the New Evangelization to youth. In youth, he saw the hope of the future of the Church and of society. For that reason, he frequently reminded youth to use their gifts for the conversion of their personal lives and the transformation of the world.¹²

Here it must be noted, too, that Blessed John Paul II called an extraordinary assembly of the Synod of Bishops for each continent to address the challenge of the New Evangelization in the particular circumstances of each place. For example, to America, that is, all of America to which Blessed John Paul II referred as one continent, the Holy Father wrote:

The commemoration of the five hundred years of evangelization will achieve its full meaning if it becomes a commitment by you the Bishops, together with your priests and people, a commitment not to re-evangelization but to a New Evangelization – new in ardor, methods and expression. Later, I invited the whole Church to respond to this call, although the program of evangelization, embracing today’s world in all its diversity, must take different shape in the light of two different situations: on the one hand, the situation of countries strongly affected by secularization, and, on the other, the situation of countries where there are still “many vital traditions of

piety and popular forms of Christian religiosity.” There is no doubt that in varying degrees both these situations are present in different countries or, better perhaps, in different groups within the various countries of the American continent.¹³

In the United States of America, there is a predominance of the phenomenon of secularization, although there also remain individual Catholic families of deep religious faith, practice of the faith and devotion, and, where a number of these families are nearby one another, they form a certain social and spiritual fraternity. There is need to stir up in all families the ardent devotion which is inherent to faith in Christ and His Church.

Beginning in the Family

The fruit of the New Evangelization, the Civilization of Love, is first realized in the family, and it is only through the family that the whole of society is transformed. It is in the family that we first meet Christ, learn about God’s love for us in Jesus Christ, are formed in the life of prayer, devotion and worship; and first experience and give the witness of Christlike love. The transformation of the family is the way of the transformation of the whole of society. In promoting the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the home, Father Mateo Crawley-Boevey observed:

¹² Cf. among others: Ioannis Pauli PP. II, Epistula Apostolica *Hoc Omine*, “ad iuvenes internationali vertente anno iuventuti dicato,” 31 Martii 1985, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 7 (1985), pp. 610-613, 620-626, nos. 12, 15. English translation: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. See also Messages for World Youth Day, 1987-2005.

¹³ “«La conmemoración del medio milenio de evangelización tendrá su significación plena si es un compromiso vuestro como Obispos, junto con vuestro presbiterio y fieles; compromiso, no de reevangelización, pero sí de una evangelización nueva. Nueva en su ardor, en sus métodos, en su expresión». Más tarde invité a toda la Iglesia a llevar a cabo esta exhortación, aunque el programa evangelizador, al extenderse a la gran diversidad que presenta hoy el mundo entero, debe diversificarse según dos situaciones claramente diferentes: la de los países muy afectados por el secularismo y la de aquellos otros donde «todavía se conservan muy vivas las tradiciones de piedad y de religiosidad popular cristiana». Se trata, sin duda, de dos situaciones presentes, en grado diverso, en diferentes países o quizás mejor, en diversos ambientes concretos dentro de los países del Continente americano.” Ioannis Pauli PP. II, Adhortatio Apostolica Postsynodalis *Ecclesia in America*, “sobre el encuentro con Jesucristo vivo, camino para la conversión, la comunión y la solidaridad en América,” 22 Ianuarii 1999, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 8 (1999), p. 742, no. 6.

Let us not deceive ourselves, in order to bring about the day, be it near or distant, of the Social Reign of Jesus Christ, proclaimed and revered as King ruling by Sovereign right throughout the whole of human society, it will be necessary for us to refashion the society of today from its very basis, that is to say to rebuild it on the model of Nazareth. Every nation is worth what its family life is worth, for a nation has ever been, either in holiness or corruption, that which the home is. There has never been any exception whatever to this rule.¹⁴

Blessed John Paul II repeatedly reminded us that the New Evangelization could only be carried out by the way of the family.

Even as society today is beset by the forces of secularism and materialism, which bear the evil fruit of the breakdown of family life and the attack on human life itself by a variety of forms of violence, so, too, the family itself suffers greatly from secularism and materialism which strike at its very foundations. Early on in his service as Successor of Saint Peter, Blessed John Paul II devoted his principal energies to addressing the crisis of the family and to strengthening the family as the first agent of the New Evangelization and of the cultivation of the Civilization of Love. For the first four years of his pontificate, his Wednesday Audience addresses developed to a remarkable

depth the theology of the human body, of human sexuality and of marriage. In his Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, “Regarding the Role of the Family in the Modern World,” issued 22 November 1981, the Feast of Christ the King, he declared:

At a moment in history in which the family is the object of numerous forces that seek to destroy it or in some way to deform it, and aware that the well-being of society and her own good are intimately tied to the good of the family, the Church perceives in a more urgent and compelling way her mission of proclaiming to all people the plan of God for marriage and the family, ensuring their full vitality and human and Christian development, and thus contributing to the renewal of society and of the People of God.¹⁵

The family is the first cell of the life of the Church and of society. Unless a transformation take place in family life for the service of the Civilization of Love, there will be no transformation of society.

Clearly, the transformation of the family comes through a deeper knowledge and love of Christ. While growth in the knowledge of the faith and of our Lord Jesus, in particular, is fundamental, the fullest expression of family life comes through a personal relationship with God through prayer, through the devotional life, and, most of all, through the Sacred Liturgy. Blessed John Paul II observed:

¹⁴ Mateo Crawley-Boevey, SS.C.C., *Jesus King of Love*, Brewster, Massachusetts: Paraclete Press, 1997, p.125 [Hereafter: *Jesus King of Love*].

¹⁵ “Hoc tempore historiae, quo familia multis impetitur viribus, eam delere aut saltem deformare nitentibus, Ecclesia, probe conscia salutem societatis suamque ipsius arcte cum fausta condicione familiae coneciti, modo vehementiore et urgentiore munus suum percipit omnibus consilium Dei de matrimonio ac familia declarandi, cuius plenum vigorem et promotionem humanam et christianam in tuto colloceat ac sic conferat ad renovationem societatis ipsiusque Populi Dei.” Ioannis Pauli PP. II, Adhortatio Apostolica *Familiaris Consortio*, “de familiae christianae muneribus in mundo huius temporis,” 22 Novembris 1981, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 2 (1982), p. 85, no. 3. English translation: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

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The fruitfulness of the Christian family, in its specific service to human advancement, which of itself cannot but lead to the transformation of the world, derives from its living union with Christ, nourished by the Liturgy, by self-oblation and by prayer.¹⁶

The center of family life and love will be the Holy Eucharist. Participation in Sunday Mass is essential to the safeguarding and fostering of the divine love poured into the heart. It is through prayer and devotional life in the home that the highest encounter with Christ in the Holy Eucharist is prepared and prolonged. Blessed John Paul II underlined the importance of family prayer, including devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in particular, in *Familiaris Consortio*, when he wrote:

As preparation for the worship celebrated in church, and as its prolongation in the home, the Christian family makes use of private prayer, which presents a great variety of forms. While this variety testifies to the extraordinary richness with which the Spirit vivifies Christian prayer, it serves also to meet the various needs and life situations of those who turn to the Lord in prayer. Apart from morning and evening

prayers, certain forms of prayer are to be expressly encouraged, following the indications of the Synod Fathers, such as reading and meditating on the Word of God, preparation for the reception of the Sacraments, devotion and consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the various forms of veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary, grace before and after meals, and observance of popular devotions.¹⁷

Christ is the program of the New Evangelization

The last three major documents of Blessed John Paul II's pontificate, which he clearly related to each other as a kind of program for the New Evangelization, were a final plea to the universal Church to carry out the New Evangelization, that is, to teach Christ's truth and to live in His love, as if for the first time, in a world which has become totally secularized, that is, forgetful of God and hostile to His law of life and love. I refer to the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, "At the Close of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000"; the Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, "On the Most Holy Rosary"; and the Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, "On the Eucharist in Its Relationship to the Church." In *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, which is the culmination of his plea

¹⁶ "Ex vitali cum Christo consociatione, quae Sacra Liturgia nutritur nec non sui ipsius oblatione et oratione, profluit etiam familiae christianae fecunditas in eius proprio ministerio ad progressionem humanam spectante, quod ex se necessario prodest mundo transformando." *Ibid.*, p. 155, no. 62.

¹⁷ "Ut autem domi praeparetur et continuetur cultus in Ecclesia celebrandus, familia utitur christiana precibus privatis, quarum magna invenitur varietas formarum: haec varietas, immensas testans divitias, secundum quas precationem christianam Spiritus movet, diversis satisfacit postulationibus condicionibusque vitae illius qui ad Dominum dirigit mentem. Praeter preces matutinas ac vespertinas, expressis verbis suadentur secundum Synodi Patrum monitionem: lectio et meditatio verbi Dei, praeparatio sacramentorum, pietas in Sacratissimum Cor Iesu et consecratio ei facta, variae rationes cultus Beatae Mariae Virginis, benedictio mensae, religionis popularis custodia." *Ibid.*, p. 154, no. 61.

for our engagement in the New Evangelization, Blessed John Paul II wrote:

I would like to rekindle this Eucharistic “amazement” by the present Encyclical Letter, in continuity with the Jubilee heritage which I have left to the Church in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* and its Marian crowning, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*. To contemplate the face of Christ, and to contemplate it with Mary, is the “program” which I have set before the Church at the dawn of the third millennium, summoning her to put out into the deep on the sea of history with the enthusiasm of the New Evangelization. To contemplate Christ involves being able to recognize Him wherever He manifests Himself, in His many forms of presence, but above all in the living sacrament of His Body and Blood.¹⁸

Our cultivation of the Civilization of Love takes its direction from the teaching of Blessed John Paul II on the New Evangelization as it reached its final expression in the just-mentioned documents.

Pope Benedict XVI has continued the apostolic work of his saintly predecessor by pointing to the personal encounter and relationship with God in Jesus Christ as the essence of the Christian faith and way of life. Before commenting on the teaching of Pope Benedict

XVI, I wish to comment briefly on the three documents of Blessed Pope John Paul seeing how they provide for us a guide in carrying out our critical mission in the Church.

All of us can easily give way to doubt and fear before the challenge of living in Christ in our totally secularized culture. Before the daunting challenge of the New Evangelization there is the tendency to doubt God’s grace and to give way to fear in responding to its “costly” demands. There is the temptation to think that we must devise some program, “some magic formula,” to transform the world.

In *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, Blessed John Paul II reminded us that it is Christ, alive for us in the Church, Who alone shows us the way. It is our humble and confident following of Christ which will transform us and our world. He wrote:

It is not therefore a matter of inventing a “new program.” The program already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever. Ultimately, it has its center in Christ Himself, Who is to be known, loved and imitated, so that in Him we may live the life of the Trinity, and with Him transform history until its fulfillment in the heavenly Jerusalem.¹⁹

If we are to carry out faithfully the New Evangelization, and so build up the Civilization of Love, we must, first, center our lives on Christ by daily prayer and Sunday Mass. When possible,

¹⁸ “Illum cupimus eucharisticum «stuporem» his Litteris Encyclicis rursus excitare, tamquam iubilem hereditatem quam Epistula Apostolica *Novo Millennio ineunte* Ecclesiae commendare voluimus et cum Mariali eius consummatione in documento *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*. Vultum Christi contemplari, quin immo eum cum Maria contueri, est propositum seu «programma» quod illucescente tertio Millennio Ecclesiae significavimus, cum eam simul hortaremur ut in altum historiae mare cum novae evangelizationis fervore procederet. Christum contemplari idem valet ac Eum agnoscere ubicumque sese ostendit, multiplici quidem in ipsius praesentia, sed potissimum in vivo corporis sanguinisque illius Sacramento.” *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, pp. 436-437, no. 6.

¹⁹ “Non itaque agitur de hinc excogitando «novo consilio». Iam enim praesto est consilium seu «programma»: illud nempe quod de Evangelio derivatur semper vivaque Traditione. Tandem in Christo ipso deprehenditur istud, qui sane cognoscendus est, diligendus atque imitandus, ut vita in eo trinitaria ducatur et cum eo historia ipsa transfiguretur ad suam usque in Hierosolymis caelestibus consummationem.” Ioannis Pauli PP. II, Epistula Apostolica *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, “Magni Iubilaei anni MM sub exitum,” 6 Ianuarii 2001, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 5 (2001), p. 285, no. 29c. English translation: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

daily Mass should become the pattern of our lives. By our prayer and devotion, especially the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Christ accompanies us throughout every day. We conclude each day with the examination of conscience and the act of contrition, reflecting on how we have honored or dishonored Christ's company in our thoughts, words and deeds. How poignant is our examination of conscience, when it takes place before the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, reminding us that our Lord accompanies always along the way of our earthly pilgrimage, in every place of our daily living, especially in our homes. Sunday Mass is the center of all that we are and do. By the regular confession of our sins and the reception of God's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance, we are absolved of our sins and strengthened to make satisfaction.

Through prayer, the devotional life and participation in the sacramental life of the Church, we come to know Christ more fully and love Him more ardently. We grow in holiness of life. We reject "a life of mediocrity, marked by a minimalist ethic and a shallow religiosity," which betrays our true identity in Christ, and we strive daily to meet the "*high standard of ordinary Christian living.*"²⁰

Students of Mary in Promoting the Civilization of Love

In carrying out the work of the New Evangelization, the Blessed Virgin Mary is our finest example and most powerful intercessor. It is Mary who first welcomed the Redeemer into the world by her "*fiat.*" The Holy Spirit formed the Sacred Heart of Jesus under the Immaculate Heart of Mary. From the moment of the Incarnation, the Immaculate Heart of Mary was perfectly one with the Sacred Heart of Jesus. From the moment of her *fiat*, she was not only the first disciple of the Lord but His best disciple. It is Mary who teaches us to look upon the Face of Christ and to do

whatever it is that He asks of us. Her response to the wine stewards at the Wedding Feast of Cana is an expression of the maternal counsel which she never fails to give us: "Do whatever He tells you" (*Jn 2:5*). Mary is the model in following her own counsel, especially at the foot of the Cross.

The praying of the Rosary is one of the most spiritually efficacious ways of contemplating the Face of Christ with Mary, coming to know more deeply, with Mary, the great mystery of the Redemptive Incarnation. Praying the Rosary, we turn to the Mother of God for her help and she directs us to her Son, the source of all our salvation.

Meditating upon the mysteries of the vocation and mission of Christ, while praying the *Hail Mary*, we unite our hearts to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and, with her, place our hearts ever more completely into the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in which are found all of the treasures of God's immeasurable mercy and love. It is the Rosary which helps us to remain in the company of the Lord Who gives Himself – Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity – to us in the Holy Eucharist. At the same time, the praying of the Rosary inspires in us the desire to be one with Christ in His Eucharistic Sacrifice. I recall to your minds once again the earlier-quoted words of Blessed John Paul II, referring to the teaching of Pope Paul VI on the Rosary and its relationship to the Sacred Liturgy.²¹

Becoming Men and Women of the Eucharist

At the School of Mary, we come to know and love Christ, most of all, in His Real Presence, in the Eucharistic Sacrifice and Banquet by which He faithfully pours out His life for us, as He first did on Calvary. Regarding the Holy Eucharist, Blessed John Paul II tells us:

In repeating what Christ did at the Last Supper in obedience to His command: "Do this in memory of Me!" we also accept Mary's invitation to obey Him

²⁰ "*«superiorem modum» ordinariae vitae christianae,*" *Ibid.*, p. 288, no. 31.

²¹ Cf. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, p. 469, no. 54

without hesitation: “Do whatever He tells you” (*Jn 2:5*). With the same maternal concern which she showed at the wedding feast of Cana, Mary seems to say to us: “Do not waver; trust in the words of my Son. If He was able to change water into wine, He can also turn bread and wine into His body and blood, and through this mystery bestow on believers the living memorial of His passover, thus becoming the ‘bread of life’.”²²

It is through participation in the Holy Eucharist that we best understand what we must do to carry out the New Evangelization, and thus build up the Civilization of Love; we must pour out our lives in union with Christ. At the same time, we are nourished with the incomparable spiritual food of the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ, which strengthens us to carry out His mission in the world.

The extraordinary attention of Blessed John Paul II to our faith in and our love of the Holy Eucharist, at the end of his pontificate, should have come as no surprise to us. Ultimately, it is only through the Holy Eucharist that the New Evangelization will take place, that we and our world will be transformed from day to day,

according to God’s plan, His divine and life-giving law.

In his Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, Blessed John Paul II underlined the truth that every celebration of the Holy Mass embraces the whole world with the love of God:

... [E]ven when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated *on the altar of the world*. It unites heaven and earth. It embraces and permeates all creation. The Son of God became man in order to restore all creation, in one supreme act of praise, to the One who made it from nothing. He, the eternal High Priest who by the blood of his Cross entered the eternal sanctuary, thus gives back to the Creator and Father all creation redeemed. He does so through the priestly ministry of the Church, to the glory of the Most Holy Trinity. Truly this is the *mysterium fidei*, which is accomplished in the Eucharist: the world which came forth from the hands of God the Creator now returns to Him redeemed by Christ.²³

Through participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, and through prayer and worship of the Most

²² “Cum nos Christi in Ultima Cena actionem, eius mandato obtemperantes, iteramus: «Hoc facite in meam commemorationem!», eadem opera Mariae invitationem ei absque dubitatione parendi suscipimus: «Quodcumque dixerit vobis, facite» (*Io 2, 5*). Materna quidem sollicitudine, quam apud Canae nuptias est testata, Maria nobis videtur dicere: «Nolite cunctari, verbo mei Filii confidite. Ipse, qui immutare aquam in vinum potuit, pariter panem vinumque efficere suum corpus suumque sanguinem potest, in hoc mysterio vivam suae Paschae memoriam credentibus tradens, ut hac ratione ‘panis vitae’ fiat.” *Ibid.*, pp. 469-470, no. 54.

²³ “Quoniam quotiens etiam parvo in altari sacelli rustici celebratur, Eucharistia quodam certo sensu semper celebratur *in ara orbis*. Caelum enim coniungit et terram. Continet et penetrat omnia creata. Homo factus est Filius Dei ut totam creaturam redintegraret, extremo quidem laudis actu, in Eum, qui omnia ex nihilo creaverat. Itaque Ipse, summus atque aeternus Sacerdos, per suae Crucis sanguinem in sanctuarium aeternum pervenit Creatorique et Patri totam creaturam redemptam reddit. Hoc consequitur per Ecclesiae sacerdotale ministerium, in Sanctissimae Trinitatis gloriam. Hoc reapse est *mysterium fidei* quod in Eucharistia completur: orbis e Dei Creatoris manibus egressus ad Eum a Christo redemptus revertitur.” *Ibid.*, p. 438, no. 8.

Blessed Sacrament outside of Mass, we discover our true identity in Christ and our mission, with Christ, in the world. If we are to be the heralds and instruments of the New Evangelization, the Holy Eucharist must be the center of our lives.

One of the last gifts of Blessed John Paul II to the Church and to the world before his death was the Year of the Eucharist. It is in the Holy Eucharist that we find the constant newness of our life in Christ, the new enthusiasm and the new energy required for the New Evangelization. In giving us the Year of the Eucharist, Blessed John Paul II wrote to us:

As I look forward to the twenty-seventh year of my Petrine ministry, I consider it a great grace to be able to call the whole Church to contemplate, praise, and adore in a special way this ineffable Sacrament. May the Year of the Eucharist be for everyone a precious opportunity to grow in awareness of the incomparable treasure which Christ has entrusted to his Church. May it encourage a more lively and fervent celebration of the Eucharist, leading to a Christian life transformed by love.²⁴

May we all center our lives in Christ, in the Holy Eucharist. Thus we will build up the Civilization of Love.

God Is Love

Pope Benedict XVI has taken up this insistence of Blessed John Paul II with regard to Christ as the program of the New Evangelization. Typically, in our culture, by which we are very much influenced, we are constantly trying to find some new program, some sure-fire answer to how to carry out the New Evangelization, while we fail to grow in the life of prayer, in the devotional life, and in the love of the Holy Eucharist. Pope Benedict XVI, continuing in the line of his saintly predecessor, has continued this emphasis: God is the instrument of the transformation of society. It is through His grace alone that we are able to transform our individual lives, our families and, so, the wider society. It is because God has first loved us and continues to offer us His love in superabundance that we can even speak of transforming ourselves and our world. In a totally secularized world, there is a great temptation to reduce our Christian life to an ideology or a set of ideas. When Christian faith and practice are so reduced, prayer, the devotional life and sacred worship become a kind of arena of personal creativity, of talking to oneself, in which the clear commitment to love and to foster love is badly obscured.

At the very beginning of his first Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict XVI underlined that our faith is, at its origin and in its various expressions the encounter and ongoing relationship with God in our Lord Jesus Christ. He wrote:

We have come to believe in God's love: in these words the Christian can express the fundamental decision of

²⁴ "Percipimus eximiam illam gratiam vicesimi septimi anni Nostris ministerii, quem innoturi sumus, quod Nos totam Ecclesiam nunc hortari possumus ad ineffabile hoc Sacramentum modo omnino singulari contemplandum, laudandum et adorandum. Eucharistiae Annus omnibus occasio excellens sit ad renovandam conscientiam de insigni hoc thesauro quem Christus suae concredidit Ecclesiae. Incitamentum sit ad magis vivam et ardentem celebrationem, ex qua christiana scaturiat existens amore transformata." Ioannis Pauli PP. II, Epistula Apostolica *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, "de eucharistico anno," 7 Octobris 2004, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 4 (2005), p. 351, no. 29. English translation: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

his life. Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.²⁵

Describing the Holy Scriptures as a love story, the story of the ceaseless and immeasurable love of God for us. Pope Benedict XVI reminds us, that notwithstanding our coldness to His love and even our open rebellion, God the Father never stops pursuing us with the gift of His life and love. Pope Benedict XVI uses strong language to describe the depth and power of God's love of us. He declares us:

[Christ's] death on the Cross is the culmination of that turning of God against Himself in which He gives Himself in order to raise man up and save him. This is love in its most radical form. By contemplating the pierced side of Christ (cf. 19:37), we can understand the starting-point of this Encyclical letter: "God is love" (1 *Jn* 4:8). It is there that this truth can be contemplated. It is from there that our definition of love must begin. In

this contemplation the Christian discovers the path along which his life and love must move.²⁶

Contemplation of glorious pierced Heart of Jesus indicates to us the path of our own conversion of life and the path of the transformation of the culture of death into a Civilization of Love.

Pope Benedict XVI reminds us, with striking words, that indeed we encounter God Himself in Christ and in His Mystical Body, the Church:

God has made Himself visible: in Jesus we are able to see the Father (cf. *Jn* 14:9). Indeed, God is visible in a number of ways. In the love-story recounted by the Bible, He comes towards us, He seeks to win our hearts, all the way to the Last Supper, to the piercing of His own Heart on the Cross, to His appearances after the Resurrection and to the great deeds by which, through the activity of the Apostles, He guided the nascent Church along its path. Nor has the Lord been absent from subsequent Church history: He encounters us ever

²⁵ "Nos Dei caritati credidimus — sic praecipuam vitae suae electionem declarare potest christianus. Ad initium, cum quis christianus fit, nulla est ethica voluntas neque magna quaedam opinio, verumtamen congressio datur cum eventu quodam, cum Persona quae novum vitae finem imponit eodemque tempore certam progressionem." Benedicti PP. XVI, Litterae Encyclicae *Deus Caritas Est*, "De christiano amore," 25 Decembris 2005, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 3 (2006), p. 217, no. 1. English translation: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

²⁶ "Eius per crucem in morte illud completur per quod contra se vertit Deus, in quo ipse se tradit, hominem sublevaturus eumque servaturus — amor hic in forma sua extrema adest. Visus in Christi latus perfossum conversus, de quo apud Ioannem fit mentio (cfr 19, 37), illud comprehendit ex quo hae Litterae Encyclicae initium sumpserunt: « Deus caritas est » (1 *Io* 4, 8). Ibi nempe veritas haec spectari potest. A quo initio capto, definiatur oportet quid sit amor. Ex hoc visu sumens initium, videndi amandique semitam reperit christianus." *Ibid.*, p. 228, no. 12.

anew, in the men and women who reflect His presence, in His word, in the Sacraments, and especially in the Eucharist.²⁷

The piercing of the Heart of Jesus, after He had died on the cross, is the sign of the immeasurable love of God Who pours out His every last energy for the sake of our eternal salvation, for the sake of having our company with Him always.

The reality of the pierced Heart of Jesus is encountered sacramentally in the Holy Eucharist. In his Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, “On the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church’s Life and Mission,” Pope Benedict XVI urges us to contemplate the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus, in order that we may reflect “on the causal connection between Christ’s Sacrifice, the Eucharist and the Church.”²⁸

Our Holy Father underlines repeatedly that the Holy Eucharist embraces the whole of our lives. He comments on “one of the most serious effects of secularization,” namely, “it has relegated the Christian faith to the margins of life as if it

were irrelevant to everyday affairs.”²⁹ He goes on to declare:

Today there is a need to rediscover that Jesus Christ is not just a private conviction or an abstract idea, but a real person, whose becoming part of human history is capable of renewing the life of every man and woman. Hence the Eucharist, as the source and summit of the Church’s life and mission, must be translated into spirituality, into a life lived “according to the Spirit” (*Rom* 8:4ff; cf. *Gal* 5:16, 25). It is significant that Saint Paul, in the passage of the Letter to the Romans, in which he invites his hearers to offer the new spiritual worship, also speaks of the need for a change in their way of living and thinking:³⁰

The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus constantly reminds us that Christ is with us and becomes the instrument by which He speaks to our hearts, drawing them to Himself, so that He may

²⁷ “visibilis factus est Deus: in Iesu Patrem nos videre possumus (cfr *Io* 14, 9). Multifarie revera videri potest Deus. In amoris historia, quae in Sacris Bibliis narratur, ipse nobis obviam venit, nos acquirere studet — usque ad Novissimam Cenam, usque ad Cor in cruce perforatum, usque ad Resuscitati visus magnaue opera, quibus ipse per actus Apostolorum Ecclesiae nascentis iter direxit. Etiam in Ecclesiae subsequentibus annalibus haud absens Dominus deprehenditur: usque denuo nobis occurrit — per homines in quibus ipse conspicitur; suum per Verbum, Sacramenta, potissimum Eucharistiam.” *Ibid.*, pp. 230-231, no. 17.

²⁸ “considerandum nos inducit causale vinculum inter Christi sacrificium, Eucharistiam atque Ecclesiam.” Benedicti PP. XVI, Ahortatio Apostolica Postsynodalis *Sacramentum Caritatis*, “de Eucharistia vitae missionisque Ecclesiae fonte et culmine,” 22 Februarii 2007, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 3 (2007), p.115, no. 14. English translation: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

²⁹ “Agnoscat oportet gravioribus ex saecularizationis superius memoratae effectibus illum esse: quod in extremos vitae limites amandata sit christiana fides, tamquam si inutilis omnino ad cotidianam hominum vitae actionem esset.” *Ibid.*, p. 164, no. 77.

³⁰ “Rursus hodie detegendum est Iesum Christum non quandam privatam esse sententiam aut doctrinam a rebus abstractam, sed personam veram quae in historiam inserta vitam valet omnium renovare. Hanc ob causam uti fons et apex vitae munerisque Ecclesiae Eucharistia in spiritalem traduci debet rem, in vitam « secundum Spiritum » (*Rom* 8,4s; cfr *Gal* 5,16.25). Notare interest sanctum Paulum, in illo *Epistulae ad Romanos* loco ubi hortatur novum ad spiritalem cultum vivendum, simul quidem necessitatem appellare mutationis proprii vivendi moris atque cogitandi:” *Ibid.*, pp. 164-165, no. 77.

send us on mission to others. The essence of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is daily conversion of life to Christ, the daily placing of our poor and sinful hearts into the all rich, all merciful, all loving, all good Heart of Jesus.

In his Letter to Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Encyclical Letter *Haurietis Aquas* of the Venerable Pope Pius XII, “On the Sacred Heart of Jesus,” Pope Benedict XVI commends the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, observing:

Moreover, not only does this mystery of God’s love for us constitute the content of the worship of and devotion to the Heart of Jesus, but in the same way it is likewise the content of all true spirituality and Christian devotion. It is consequently important to stress that the basis of the devotion is as old as Christianity itself.³¹

There can be no question that the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is a most efficacious means of the New Evangelization, of the development and fostering of the Civilization of Love.

Enthronement of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

The Enthronement of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Consecration of the Home to the Sacred Heart of Jesus gives full expression to the Sacred Heart devotion. Regarding the Enthronement, Father Mateo Crawley-Boevey declared:

The Enthronement then is simply the realization, not of this or that one of the requests made by our Savior to St. Margaret Mary, but the complete and integral realization of all of them, calling forth the fulfillment of the splendid promises with which the King of Love has enriched them. Note that we say “integral realization” of all the requests made in Paray; for the supreme end of the Enthronement is not, and ought not to be, to further a new pious practice, but to sanctify the home, and convert it into a living and social throne for the divine King.³²

Through the Enthronement, we acknowledge the presence of Christ with us in our home or place of work. We are reminded that our homes and our places of work are the theater of the New Evangelization. Christ is with us, pouring forth from His Most Sacred Heart the grace of conversion in abundance.

The Consecration gives verbal expression to what the Enthronement symbolizes. The Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque expresses the reality to which the devotion points:

I take Thee, O Sacred Heart, for the sole object of my love, the protection of my life, the pledge of my salvation, the remedy of my frailty and inconstancy, the reparation for all the

³¹ “Questo mistero dell’amore di Dio per noi, peraltro, non costituisce soltanto il contenuto del culto e della devozione al Cuore di Gesù: esso è, allo stesso modo, il contenuto di ogni vera spiritualità e devozione cristiana. E’ quindi importante sottolineare che il fondamento di questa devozione è antico come il cristianesimo stesso.” Benedicti PP. XVI, Epistula *L recurrente anniversario a vulgatis Litteris Encyclicis “Haurietis aquas,”* “Al Reverendissimo Padre Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.I., Preposito Generale della Compagnia di Gesù,” 15 Maii 2006, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 6 (2006), p. 459. English translation: *L’Osservatore Romano Weekly Edition in English*, 14 June 2006, p. 4.

³²*Jesus King of Love*, p. 125.

defects of my life, and my secure refuge at the hour of my death.³³

The words of consecration of Saint Margaret Mary express the personal relationship with God, which is ours, thanks to His immeasurable and ceaseless love of us. The words of the consecration express what the Enthronement represents, the presence of God the Son made man, our Lord Jesus Christ, in our home, as our King and Friend, the most noble and regal of friends because His love of us is totally unconditional, selfless and pure.

Because our relationship with God in our friendship with Christ the King is one of grace, it is true to say that the image of Christ the King, enthroned in our home or place of work or recreation looks into our eyes, looks upon us always, even as we look upon the image and gaze into the eyes of the glorious Christ, seated at the right hand of the Father but dwelling with us always. The adornment of the place of Enthronement with His Holy Word, the lighted candle, and pictures of our family or of those for whom we are especially praying is, therefore, most fitting. Rightly, we pause before the image at various times throughout the day to speak to our Lord and to let Him speak to us. The living relationship with Christ is always encouraged and supported by the Mother of God, by the maternal love which brings our hearts to the glorious pierced Heart of her Divine Son, ever open to receive them. Keeping our hearts close to her Immaculate Heart, she helps us to be one in heart with the Heart of Jesus, as she has been since the moment of the Incarnation.

The way of life in the home in which the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is enthroned

makes the home a hearth of the Civilization of Love, from which the faithful and ardent love of Christ extends and transforms the world. Those who enter the home meet not only the family members but, most importantly of all, they meet Christ. Those who go out from the home will not fail to take Christ with them, so that He may be the inspiration and strength of all that they think and say and do.

The Enthronement and what it symbolizes only makes sense because of the Real Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist. The Enthronement leads us to an ever deeper desire of communion with our Lord in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, and it returns us, in thought and prayer, to that Communion throughout the day. Father Mateo wrote:

We certainly do not pretend to compare the symbol of love with His real and substantial Presence in the Consecrated Host. However, by means of the Enthronement, Jesus really enters the home to have a part in and guide the whole life of the family. His love becomes the soul of both parents and children and His Heart their shrine.³⁴

Father Mateo spoke of “the link between the two tabernacles—the altar and the home, the Eucharist and the family hearth.”³⁵ In a real sense, the place of Enthronement in the home is a constant reminder of the altar of sacrifice and tabernacle of the parish church from which our Lord gives us life from His Eucharistic Heart.

CONCLUSION

³³ “Je vous prends donc, ô Sacré-Cœur, pour l'unique objet de mon amour, le protecteur de ma vie, le remède de mon inconstance, la réparation de tous les défauts de ma vie et mon asile assuré à l'heure de ma mort,” in: *Histoire de la Dévotion au Sacré Cœur. Tome I: Vie de Sainte Marguerite-Marie*, A. Hamon, S.J., 5^e édition, Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1923, p. 387. English translation: *The Thoughts and Sayings of Saint Margaret Mary*, compiled by the Sisters of the Visitation of Paray-le-Monial, tr. Sisters of the Visitation of Partridge Green, Horsham, West Sussex, Rockford, Illinois: Tan Books and Publishers, 1985, p. 103.

³⁴ *Jesus King of Love*, p. 130.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

I close with two brief stories from my experience of the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. A husband whose family had enthroned the Sacred Heart of Jesus was caring for a neighbor who was dying of cancer at home. As the end was drawing near, the man who was dying became exceedingly restless. His wife became more and more distressed to see her husband in his last days in this state. The neighbor who had enthroned the Sacred Heart of Jesus in his home suggested the Enthronement in the dying man's room. The suggested was welcomed by both the dying man and his wife. From the moment of the Enthronement, a calm came over the man, his restlessness was replaced with prayer, and he died a most peaceful death, fortified by the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist.

Another couple well known to me had two teenage children, a boy and a girl, who were constantly quarreling with one another. The situation had gone beyond the somewhat normal tension that is often found between two teenagers and had brought an unrest and unhappiness into the whole home, because the quarreling really bordered on a lack of respect for one another. The parents and children made the preparation for the Enthronement and finally enthroned the Sacred Heart of Jesus in their home on Good Friday. The mother wrote to me some weeks later, telling me how the two teenagers were now showing respect for one another and the home was at peace. The mother wrote that she asked her son about the change, and he responded immediately that how else should one act in the presence of Jesus.

I close, placing all of my reflections within the context of the call which God gives to each of us to pour out his life, with Christ, in selfless love of God and neighbor. In a certain sense, everything in our Christian life is directed to knowledge of God's plan for each of us and our following of God's call with an undivided heart. Our vocation in life is our way to salvation and

our principal way of working with Christ for the salvation of the world.

From the moment of our baptism, God has a special plan for each of us. He desires that we save our souls by giving our lives completely, with Christ, in love, either in the married life, the dedicated single life, the consecrated life or the priesthood. It is only when we know our vocation in life and embrace it with all our being that we find joy and peace, and are able to place the good gifts which God has given to us at the service of others.

In our culture which is indifferent to religious faith and totally secularized, it is difficult to hear the voice of God Who calls us. It is especially difficult to hear God's call to serve Him and His holy people in the consecrated life and the priesthood. The Enthronement of the Sacred of Jesus disposes a young person to spend time each day in silence before God, asking Him how He would have him serve Him and His holy people. In prayer, at the Holy Mass and before the Blessed Sacrament, prayer extended before the image of the Sacred Heart, a young person comes to know his vocation in life and receives the grace to embrace it with an undivided heart.

Cardinal Amleto Cicognani, Secretary of State of Pope Pius XII, wrote to Father Francis Larkin, successor to Father Mateo in the work of promoting devotion to the Sacred Heart, these words with which I would like to close:

The Kingship of God in the home reminds Christian spouses that true conjugal love is taken up into the divine Love, is sustained and enriched by the redemptive grace of Christ. They are in this way enabled to fulfill worthily their high mission as fathers and mothers, able to educate their children religiously, and even ready to give some of them joyously to the Lord, to be consecrated to His service

and that of their neighbour in the priesthood or in the religious life.³⁶

There can be no question that the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is rich in grace for the faithful living of our vocation and for the vocational discernment of our young people. It is through our response to God's call in our vocation that we are saved and our world is transformed and that response is inspired and greatly assisted through the devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

May the Mother of God, our Blessed Mother, draw our hearts to her own Immaculate Heart and lead us, as obedient sons and daughters,

to place our poor and sinful hearts into the Sacred Heart of Jesus. From the Heart of Jesus, enthroned in our hearts and our homes, we will draw the healing and strength, without cease, to build up in our homes and, therefore, in our society the Civilization of Love.

Presentation given at the *Diocese of La Crosse 2011 Catechetical Conference, Transforming Hearts to Christ...Both Mine and Others*, at Aquinas High School, La Crosse, Wisconsin, Friday, July 29, 2011.

³⁶ A letter from His Eminence, Amleto Cardinal Cicognani, Secretary of State, written in the name of His Holiness Pope Paul VI, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the home, Martii 13, 1967, in: *Jesus King of Love*, p. 200.