



Message on the Month of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

1 June 2026

His Eminence Frank Cardinal Leo
Metropolitan Archbishop of Toronto

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

May Jesus and Mary be in your souls.

Each year Holy Mother Church dedicates the month of **June** to the **Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ**. This devotion invites us to contemplate not only the mystery of Christ's love, but also the kind of hearts we are called to develop in the world (Mt 11:29; Jn 13:34). When we refer to the "Sacred Heart of Jesus" we recall the whole mystery of Christ - his Person, his mission and his infinite divine-human love for the Father and for humanity. As the Catechism teaches, Christ "has loved us all with a human heart", and his pierced Heart is rightly considered "the chief sign and symbol of that love with which the divine Redeemer continually loves the eternal Father and all human beings" without exception (CCC, 478).

In the Gospels, we often see how Jesus responds to people with a sensitive heart that reveals itself in a remarkable attentiveness to their suffering. The evangelists repeatedly describe him as being "moved with compassion". He notices the hungry crowd before they ask for food (Mt 14:14–16); he stops for the blind man others try to silence (Mk 10:46–52), and he restores dignity to those whom society has forgotten (Lk 7:13). These moments reveal something profound: the heart of Christ is never distant from human need. It is a heart that sees, listens, and responds (Heb 4:15). And as the Church pondered these scenes - above all in the act of redemption when the side of Christ Crucified was opened - we too learn to speak ever more clearly of the love revealed in his Heart.

This Gospel portrait of Christ's compassion was not lost on the early Church. Long before devotion to the Sacred Heart took its modern form through St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, the Fathers of the Church reflected deeply on the mystery of the Lord's pierced side, seeing in his wounds the sign of his love and his desire to draw us into his Heart. St. Augustine of Hippo taught that the open side of Christ reveals the love from which the Church, and her sacraments of water and blood are born (*Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 120; cf. SC, 5). St. John Chrysostom saw in Christ's compassion the pattern for all Christian charity (*Homilies on Matthew*, 50). St. Ambrose of Milan saw in the wounded hands of Christ an image of the divine embrace that draws all humanity to itself, teaching that the outstretched arms of the crucified Lord signify God's desire to gather the whole world into his mercy (*On the Christian Faith*, II.7). And St. John Damascene held that the wounds of the risen Christ remain visible as a perpetual intercession before the Father, so that the Church is emboldened to bring her own needs and the needs of the world before God in confident prayer (*An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, IV.27).



For this reason, devotion to the Sacred Heart must never remain simply a private or sentimental practice. It is meant to shape the way Christians live and act in the world (Jm 2:14–17; 1 Jn 3:16–18); namely, by meditating on the love of Christ, we are not only drawn into that love but seek to imitate it. Our devotion must be rooted in the Gospel and lead us to imitate Christ's love (*Dilexit Nos*, 83). When we contemplate the heart of Christ, we are invited to model our lives on him who is “meek and humble of heart,” and whose pierced side draws all believers to himself (Mt 11:29; Jn 19:34–37).

The Sacred Heart is therefore a **school of compassion**. When we spend time in prayer before the Lord - especially in the Eucharist - we gradually learn his way of loving (Jn 6:54–56; 1 Cor 10:16; CCC 2669). June offers us a practical spiritual invitation, a moment to ask a simple but demanding question: **does my heart resemble the heart of Christ?** Scripture reminds us that the Christian life involves genuine transformation: “I will give you a new heart” (Ez 36:26), and believers are called to share in the very mind and love of Christ (Phil 2:5).

Finally, during the month of June, dedicated entirely to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we celebrate liturgically not only the **Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus**, but also the annual **World Day of Prayer for the Sanctification of Priests**. We are invited to lift up our prayers of intercession (CCC, 2634–2636) for those servants of the Gospel and of the Church whose lives have been offered to the Lord for the salvation of humankind. As men called and gifted, formed and ordained, they are sent into the world for the life of the world. While all are called to holiness and service, in a specific manner due to their particular mission, priests are called to avoid at all costs any temptation to half-heartedness, lukewarmness or mediocrity. Priests are a gift from the Lord to the Church and to each of us personally. They need our support and encouragement, they need our understanding and our collaboration, they need our love, respect and our prayers.

I close with those inspiring words of Pope St. John Paul II: “While the Second Vatican Council speaks of the universal call to holiness, in the case of the priest we must speak of a special call to holiness. Christ needs holy priests! Today’s world demands holy priests. Only a Holy priest can become, in an increasingly secularized world, a resounding witness to Christ and his Gospel. And only thus can a priest become a guide for men and women and a teacher of holiness. The truest secret of authentic pastoral success does not lie in material means, much less sophisticated programs. The lasting results of pastoral endeavors are born of the holiness of the priest. This is the foundation!” (*Gift and Mystery*, p.89–90)