

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

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The treatment of this subject is divided into two parts:

- [Doctrinal explanations](#)
- [Historical ideas](#)

Doctrinal explanations

Devotion to the Sacred Heart is but a special form of devotion to [Jesus](#). We shall [know](#) just what it is and what distinguishes it when we ascertain its object, its foundations, and its proper [act](#).

Special object of the devotion to the Sacred Heart

The nature of this question is complex and frequently becomes more complicated because of the difficulties arising from terminology. Omitting terms that are over-technical, we shall study the [ideas](#) in themselves, and, that we may the sooner find our bearings, it will be well to remember the meaning and use of the word *heart* in current language.

(a) The word *heart* awakens, first of all, the [idea](#) of a material heart, of the vital organ that throbs within our bosom, and which we vaguely realize as intimately connected not only with our own physical, but with our emotional and [moral](#) life. Now this heart of flesh is currently accepted as the emblem of the emotion and [moral](#) life with which we associate it, and hence the place

assigned to the word heart in symbolic language, as also the use of the same word to designate those things symbolized by the heart. Note, for instance, the expressions "to open one's heart", "to give one's heart", etc. It may happen that the symbol becomes divested of its material meaning that the sign is overlooked in beholding only the thing signified. Thus, in current language, the word [soul](#) no longer suggests the thought of breath, and the word heart brings to mind only the [idea](#) of [courage](#) and [love](#). But this is perhaps a figure of speech or a metaphor, rather than a symbol. A symbol is a real sign, whereas a metaphor is only a verbal sign; a symbol is a thing that signifies another thing, but a metaphor is a word used to indicate something different from its proper meaning. Finally, in current language, we are constantly passing from the part to the whole, and, by a perfectly natural figure of speech, we use the word heart to designate a [person](#). These [ideas](#) will aid us in determining the object of the devotion to the Sacred Heart.

(b) The question lies between the material, the metaphorical, and the symbolic sense of the word heart; whether the object of the devotion is the Heart of flesh, as such, or the [love](#) of [Jesus Christ](#) metaphorically signified by the word heart; or the Heart of flesh, but as symbol of the emotional and [moral](#) life of [Jesus](#), and especially His [love](#) for us. We reply that worship is rightly paid to the Heart of flesh, inasmuch as the latter symbolizes and recalls the [love](#) of [Jesus](#), and His emotional and [moral](#) life. Thus, although directed to the material Heart, it does not stop there: it also includes [love](#), that [love](#) which is its principal object, but which it reaches only in and through the Heart of flesh, the sign and symbol of this [love](#). Devotion to the Heart of [Jesus](#) alone, as to a noble part of His Divine Body, would not be devotion to the Sacred Heart as understood and approved by the [Church](#), and the same must also be said of devotion to the [love](#) of [Jesus](#) as detached from His Heart of flesh, or else connected therewith by no other tie than that of a word taken in the metaphorical sense. Hence, in the devotion, there are two elements: a sensible element, the Heart of flesh, and a spiritual element, that which this Heart of flesh recalls spiritual element, that which this Heart of flesh recalls and represents. But these two elements do not form two distinct objects, merely co-ordinated they constitute but one, just as do the body and [soul](#), and the sign and the thing signified. Hence it is also understood that these two elements are as [essential](#) to the devotion as body and [soul](#) are [essential](#) to [man](#). Of the two elements constituting the whole, the principal one is [love](#), which is as much the [cause](#) of the devotion and its reason for existence as the [soul](#) is the principal element in [man](#). Consequently, devotion to the Sacred Heart may be defined as devotion to the adorable Heart of [Jesus Christ](#) in so far as this Heart represents and recalls His [love](#); or, what amounts to the same thing, devotion to the [love](#) of [Jesus Christ](#) in so far as this [love](#) is recalled and symbolically represented to us by His Heart of flesh.

(c) Hence the devotion is based entirely upon the symbolism of the heart. It is this symbolism that imparts to its meaning and its unity, and this symbolism is admirably completed by the representation of the Heart as wounded. Since the Heart of [Jesus](#) appears to us as the sensible sign of His [love](#), the visible wound in the Heart will naturally recall the invisible wound of this [love](#). This symbolism also explains that the devotion, although giving the Heart an [essential](#) place, is but little concerned with the [anatomy](#) of the heart or with physiology. Since, in images of the Sacred Heart, the symbolic expression must dominate all else, anatomical accuracy is not looked for; it would injure the devotion by rendering the symbolism less evident. It is eminently proper that the heart as an emblem be distinguished from the anatomical heart: the suitability of the image is favourable to the expression of the [idea](#). A visible heart is [necessary](#) for an image

of the Sacred Heart, but this visible heart must be a symbolic heart. Similar observations are in order for physiology, in which the devotion cannot be totally disinterested, because the Heart of Flesh toward which the worship is directed in order to read therein the [love](#) of [Jesus](#), is the Heart of [Jesus](#), the real, [living](#) Heart that, in all [truth](#), may be said to have [loved](#) and suffered; the Heart that, as we feel ourselves, had such a share in His emotional and [moral](#) life; the Heart that, as we [know](#) from a [knowledge](#), however rudimentary, of the operations of our [human life](#), had such a part in the operations of the [Master's](#) life. But the relation of the Heart to the [love](#) of Christ is not that of a purely conventional sign, as in the relation of the word to the thing, or of the flag to the [idea](#) of one's country; this Heart has been and is still inseparably connected with that life of benefactions and [love](#). However, it is sufficient for our devotion that we [know](#) and feel this intimate connection. We have nothing to do with the physiology of the Sacred Heart nor with determining the exact functions of the heart in daily life. We [know](#) that the symbolism of the heart is a symbolism founded upon reality and that it constitutes the special object of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, which devotion is in no danger of falling into [error](#).

(d) The heart is, above all, the emblem of [love](#), and by this characteristic, the devotion to the Sacred Heart is naturally defined. However, being directed to the [loving](#) Heart of [Jesus](#), it naturally encounters whatever in [Jesus](#) is connected with this [love](#). Now, was not this [love](#) the motive of all that Christ did and suffered? Was not all His inner, even more than His outward, life dominated by this [love](#)? On the other hand, the devotion to the Sacred Heart, being directed to the [living](#) Heart of [Jesus](#), thus becomes familiar with the whole inner life of the [Master](#), with all His [virtues](#) and sentiments, finally, with [Jesus infinitely loving](#) and lovable. Hence, a first extension of the devotion is from the [loving](#) Heart to the intimate [knowledge](#) of [Jesus](#), to His sentiments and [virtues](#), to His whole emotional and [moral](#) life; from the [loving](#) Heart to all the manifestations of Its [love](#). There is still another extension which, although having the same meaning, is made in another way, that is by passing from the Heart to the [Person](#), a transition which, as we have seen, is very naturally made. When speaking of a large heart our allusion is to the [person](#), just as when we mention the Sacred Heart we mean [Jesus](#). This is not, however, because the two are synonymous but when the word heart is used to designate the [person](#), it is because such a [person](#) is considered in whatsoever related to his emotional and [moral](#) life. Thus, when we designate [Jesus](#) as the Sacred Heart, we mean [Jesus](#) manifesting His Heart, we mean [Jesus](#) manifesting His Heart, [Jesus](#) all [loving](#) and amiable. [Jesus](#) entire is thus recapitulated in the Sacred Heart as all is recapitulated in [Jesus](#).

(e) In thus devoting oneself to [Jesus](#) all [loving](#) and lovable, one cannot fail to observe that His [love](#) is rejected. [God](#) is constantly lamenting that in [Holy Writ](#), and the [saints](#) have always heard within their hearts the plaint of unrequited [love](#). Indeed one of the [essential](#) phases of the devotion is that it considers the [love](#) of [Jesus](#) for us as a despised, ignored [love](#). He Himself revealed this when He complained so bitterly to [St. Margaret Mary](#).

(f) This [love](#) is everywhere manifest in [Jesus](#) and in His life, and it alone can explain Him together with His words and His acts. Nevertheless, it shines forth more resplendently in certain [mysteries](#) from which great good accrues to us, and in which [Jesus](#) is more lavish of His [loving](#) benefactions and more complete in His [gift](#) of self, namely, in the [Incarnation](#), in the Passion, and in the Eucharist. Moreover, these [mysteries](#) have a place apart in the devotion which,

everywhere seeking [Jesus](#) and the signs of His [love](#) and favours, finds them here to an even greater extent than in particular acts.

(g) We have already seen that devotion to the Sacred Heart, being directed to the Heart of [Jesus](#) as the emblem of [love](#), has mainly in view His [love](#) for [men](#). This is obviously not that it excludes His [love](#) for [God](#), for this included in His [love](#) for [men](#), but it is above all the devotion to "the Heart that has so [loved men](#)", according to the words quoted by [St. Margaret Mary](#).

(h) Finally, the question arises as to whether the [love](#) which we [honour](#) in this devotion is that with which [Jesus](#) loves us as [Man](#) or that with which He loves us as [God](#); whether it is [created](#) or uncreated, His [human](#) or His Divine [Love](#). Undoubtedly it is the [love](#) of [God](#) made [Man](#), the [love](#) of the [Incarnate Word](#). However, it does not seem that devout [persons](#) think of separating these two loves any more than they separate the two natures in [Jesus](#). Besides, even though we might wish to settle this part of the question at any cost, we would find that the opinions of authors are at variance. Some, considering that the Heart of Flesh is connected with [human love](#) only, conclude that it does not symbolize Divine [love](#) which, moreover, is not proper to the [Person](#) of [Jesus](#), and that, therefore, Divine [love](#) is not the direct object of the devotion. Others, while admitting that Divine [love](#) apart from the [Incarnate Word](#) is not the object of the devotion, believe it to be such when considered as the [love](#) of the [Incarnate Word](#), and they do not see why this [love](#) also could not be symbolized by the Heart of flesh nor why, in this event, the devotion should be limited to [created love](#) only.

Foundations of the devotion

The question may be considered under three aspects: the historical, the [theological](#), and the [scientific](#).

(a) Historical foundations

In approving the devotion to the Sacred Heart, the [Church](#) did not trust to the [visions](#) of [St. Margaret Mary](#); she made [abstraction](#) of these and examined the worship in itself. [Margaret Mary's visions](#) could be [false](#), but the devotion would not, on that account, be any less worthy or solid. However, the fact is that the devotion was propagated chiefly under the influence of the movement started at [Paray-le-Monial](#); and prior to her [beatification](#), [Margaret Mary's visions](#) were most critically examined by the [Church](#), whose judgment in such cases does not involve her [infallibility](#) but implies only a [human certainty](#) sufficient to warrant consequent speech and action.

(b) Theological foundations

The Heart of [Jesus](#), like all else that belongs to His [Person](#), is worthy of [adoration](#), but this would not be so if It were considered as isolated from this [Person](#) and as having no connection with It. But it not thus that the Heart is considered, and, in his [Bull "Auctorem fidei"](#), 1794, [Pius VI](#) authoritatively vindicated the devotion in this respect against the [calumnies](#) of the [Jansenists](#). The worship, although paid to the Heart of [Jesus](#), extends further than the Heart of flesh, being directed to the [love](#) of which this Heart is the [living](#) and expressive symbol. On this point the

devotion requires no justification, as it is to the [Person](#) of [Jesus](#) that it is directed; but to the [Person](#) as inseparable from His Divinity. [Jesus](#), the [living apparition](#) of the [goodness](#) of [God](#) and of His paternal [love](#), [Jesus infinitely loving](#) and amiable, studied in the principal manifestations of His [love](#), is the object of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, as indeed He is the object of the [Christian religion](#). The difficulty lies in the union of the heart and [love](#), in the relation which the devotion supposes between the one and the other. Is not this an [error](#) long since discarded? If so, it remains to examine whether the devotion, considered in this respect, is well founded.

(c) Philosophical and scientific foundations

In this respect there has been some uncertainty amongst [theologians](#), not as regards the basis of things, but in the matter of explanations. Sometimes they have spoken as if the heart were the organ of [love](#), but this point has no bearing on the devotion, for which it suffices that the heart be the symbol of [love](#), and that, for the basis of the symbolism, a real connection exist between the heart and the emotions. Now, the symbolism of the heart is a fact and every one feels that in the heart there is a sort of an echo of our sentiments. The physiological study of this resonance may be very interesting, but it is in no wise [necessary](#) to the devotion, as its foundation is a fact attested by daily experience, a fact which physiological study confirms and of which it determines the [conditions](#), but which neither supposes this study nor any special acquaintance with its subject.

The proper act of the devotion

This [act](#) is required by the very object of the devotion, since devotion to the [love](#) of [Jesus](#) for us should be pre-eminently a devotion of [love](#) for [Jesus](#). It is characterized by a reciprocation of [love](#); its aim is to [love Jesus](#) who has so [loved](#) us, to return [love](#) for [love](#). Since, moreover, the [love](#) of [Jesus](#) manifests itself to the devout [soul](#) as a [love](#) despised and outraged, especially in the [Eucharist](#), the [love](#) expressed in the devotion naturally assumes a character of [reparation](#), and hence the importance of acts of [atonement](#), the Communion of [reparation](#), and compassion for [Jesus](#) suffering. But no special [act](#), no practice whatever, can exhaust the riches of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. The [love](#) which is its [soul](#) embraces all and, the better one understands it, the more firmly is he convinced that nothing can vie with it for making [Jesus](#) live in us and for bringing him who lives by it to [love God](#), in union with [Jesus](#), with all his heart, all his [soul](#), all his strength.

Historical ideas on the development of the devotion

(1) From the [time](#) of [St. John](#) and [St. Paul](#) there has always been in the [Church](#) something like devotion to the [love](#) of [God](#), Who so [loved](#) the world as to give it His only-begotten Son, and to the [love](#) of [Jesus](#), Who has so [loved](#) us as to deliver Himself up for us. But, accurately speaking, this is not the devotion to the Sacred Heart, as it pays no homage to the Heart of [Jesus](#) as the symbol of His [love](#) for us. From the earliest centuries, in accordance with the example of the [Evangelist](#), [Christ's](#) open side and the [mystery](#) of blood and water were meditated upon, and the [Church](#) was beheld issuing from the side of [Jesus](#), as [Eve](#) came forth from the side of [Adam](#). But there is nothing to indicate that, during the first ten centuries, any worship was rendered the wounded Heart.

(2) It is in the eleventh and twelfth centuries that we find the first unmistakable indications of devotion to the Sacred Heart. Through the wound in the side of the wound Heart was gradually reached, and the wound in the Heart symbolized the wound of [love](#). It was in the fervent atmosphere of the [Benedictine](#) or [Cistercian monasteries](#), in the world of [Anselmian](#) or [Bernardine](#) thought, that the devotion arose, although it is impossible to say positively what were its first texts or were its first votaries. To [St. Gertrude](#), [St. Mechtilde](#), and the author of the "Vitis mystica" it was already well known. We cannot state with [certainty](#) to whom we are indebted for the "Vitis mystica". Until recent times its authorship had generally been ascribed to [St. Bernard](#) and yet, by the late publishers of the beautiful and scholarly Quaracchi edition, it has been attributed, and not without plausible reasons, to [St. Bonaventure](#) ("S. Bonaventura opera omnia", 1898, VIII, LIII sq.). But, be this as it may, it contains one of the most beautiful passages that ever inspired the devotion to the Sacred Heart, one appropriated by the [Church](#) for the lessons of the second [nocturn](#) of the [feast](#). To [St. Mechtilde](#) (d. 1298) and [St. Gertrude](#) (d. 1302) it was a familiar devotion which was translated into many beautiful [prayers](#) and exercises. What deserves special mention is the vision of [St. Gertrude](#) on the [feast](#) of [St. John the Evangelist](#), as it forms an epoch in the history of the devotion. Allowed to rest her head near the wound in the [Saviour's](#) she heard the beating of the Divine Heart and asked [John](#) if, on the night of the [Last Supper](#), he too had felt these delightful pulsations, why he had never spoken of the fact. [John](#) replied that this [revelation](#) had been reserved for subsequent ages when the world, having grown cold, would have need of it to rekindle its [love](#) ("Legatus divinae pietatis", IV, 305; "Revelationes Gertrudianae", ed. Poitiers and Paris, 1877).

(3) From the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, the devotion was propagated but it did not seem to have developed in itself. It was everywhere practised by privileged [souls](#), and the lives of the [saints](#) and annals of different religious congregations, of the [Franciscans](#), [Dominicans](#), [Carthusians](#), etc., furnish many examples of it. It was nevertheless a private, [individual](#) devotion of the [mystical](#) order. Nothing of a general movement had been inaugurated, unless one would so regard the propagation of the devotion to the [Five Wounds](#), in which the Wound in the Heart figured most prominently, and for the furtherance of which the [Franciscans](#) seem to have laboured.

(4) It appears that in the sixteenth century, the devotion took an onward step and passed from the domain of [mysticism](#) into that of [Christian asceticism](#). It was constituted an objective devotion with [prayers](#) already formulated and special exercises of which the value was extolled and the practice commended. This we learn from the writings of those two masters of the spiritual life, the [pious Lanspergius](#) (d. 1539) of the [Carthusians](#) of Cologne, and the devout [Louis of Blois](#) (Blosius; 1566), a [Benedictine](#) and [Abbot](#) of [Liessies](#) in Hainaut. To these may be added [Blessed John of Avila](#) (d. 1569) and [St. Francis de Sales](#), the latter belonging to the seventeenth century.

(5) From that [time](#) everything betokened an early bringing to light of the devotion. [Ascetic](#) writers spoke of it, especially those of the [Society of Jesus](#), [Alvarez de Paz](#), Luis de la Puente, Saint-Jure, and Nouet, and there still exist special treatises upon it such as [Father Druzbecki's](#) (d. 1662) small work, "Meta Cordium, Cor Jesu". Amongst the [mystics](#) and [pious souls](#) who practised the devotion were [St. Francis Borgia](#), [Blessed Peter Canisius](#), [St. Aloysius Gonzaga](#), and [St. Alphonsus Rodriguez](#), of the [Society of Jesus](#); also [Venerable Marina de Escobar](#) (d. 1633), in [Spain](#); the Venerable Madeleine St. Joseph and the [Venerable Marguerite of the](#)

[Blessed Sacrament](#), [Carmelites](#), in [France](#); Jeanne de S. Mathieu Deleloe (d. 1660), a [Benedictine](#), in [Belgium](#); the worthy Armelle of Vannes (d. 1671); and even in [Jansenistic](#) or worldly centres, Marie de Valernod (d. 1654) and [Angélique Arnauld](#); M. Boudon, the great [archdeacon](#) of [Evreux](#), Father Huby, the apostle of [retreats](#) in Brittany, and, above all, the [Venerable Marie de l'Incarnation](#), who died at Quebec in 1672. The Visitation seemed to be awaiting [St. Margaret Mary](#); its spirituality, certain [intuitions](#) of [St. Francis de Sales](#), the [meditations](#) of Mère l'Huillier (d. 1655), the [visions](#) of Mother Anne-Marguerite Clément (d. 1661), and of Sister Jeanne-Bénigne Gojos (d. 1692), all paved the way. The image of the Heart of [Jesus](#) was everywhere in evidence, which fact was largely due to the [Franciscan](#) devotion to the [Five Wounds](#) and to the habit formed by the [Jesuits](#) of placing the image on their title-page of their books and the walls of their churches.

(6) Nevertheless, the devotion remained an [individual](#) or at least a private devotion. It was reserved to [Blessed Jean Eudes](#) (1602-1680) to make it public, to [honour](#) it with an Office, and to establish a [feast](#) for it. [Père Eudes](#) was above all the apostle of the [Heart of Mary](#); but in his devotion to the [Immaculate Heart](#) there was a share for the Heart of [Jesus](#). Little by little the devotion to the Sacred Heart became a separate one, and on 31 August, 1670, the first [feast](#) of the Sacred Heart was celebrated with great [solemnity](#) in the Grand Seminary of [Rennes](#). [Coutances](#) followed suit on 20 October, a day with which the [Eudist feast](#) was thenceforth to be connected. The [feast](#) soon spread to other [dioceses](#), and the devotion was likewise adopted in various [religious](#) communities. Here and there it came into contact with the devotion begun at [Paray](#), and a fusion of the two naturally resulted.

(7) It was to [Margaret Mary Alacoque](#) (1647-1690), a [humble](#) Visitandine of the [monastery](#) at [Paray-le-Monial](#), that Christ chose to reveal the desires of His Heart and to confide the task of imparting new life to the devotion. There is nothing to indicate that this [pious](#) religious had [known](#) the devotion prior to the [revelations](#), or at least that she had paid any attention to it. These [revelations](#) were numerous, and the following [apparitions](#) are especially remarkable: that which occurred on the [feast](#) of St. John, when [Jesus](#) permitted [Margaret Mary](#), as He had formerly allowed [St. Gertrude](#), to rest her head upon His Heart, and then disclosed to her the wonders of His [love](#), telling her that He desired to make them [known](#) to all [mankind](#) and to diffuse the treasures of His [goodness](#), and that He had chosen her for this work (27 Dec., probably 1673); that, probably distinct from the preceding, in which He requested to be [honoured](#) under the figure of His Heart of flesh; that, when He appeared radiant with [love](#) and asked for a devotion of expiatory [love](#) — [frequent Communion](#), Communion on the First Friday of the month, and the observance of the Holy Hour (probably June or July, 1674); that known as the "great [apparition](#)" which took place during the [octave](#) of [Corpus Christi](#), 1675, probably on 16 June, when He said, "Behold the Heart that has so [loved men](#) . . . instead of gratitude I receive from the greater part (of [mankind](#)) only ingratitude . . .", and asked her for a [feast](#) of [reparation](#) of the Friday after the [octave](#) of [Corpus Christi](#), bidding her consult [Father de la Colombière](#), then superior of the small [Jesuit](#) house at [Paray](#); and finally, those in which [solemn](#) homage was asked on the part of the king, and the mission of propagating the new devotion was especially confided to the religious of the Visitation and the [priests](#) of the [Society of Jesus](#). A few days after the "great [apparition](#)", of June, 1675, [Margaret Mary](#) made all [known](#) to [Father de la Colombière](#), and the latter, recognizing the action of the [spirit of God](#), [consecrated](#) himself to the Sacred Heart, directed the [holy](#) Visitandine to write an account of the [apparition](#), and made use of every available

opportunity discreetly to circulate this account through [France](#) and [England](#). At his death, 15 February 1682, there was found in his journal of spiritual retreats a copy in his own handwriting of the account that he had requested of [Margaret Mary](#), together with a few reflections on the usefulness of the devotion. This journal, including the account and a beautiful "offering" to the Sacred Heart, in which the devotion was well explained, was published at [Lyons](#) in 1684. The little book was widely read, even at [Paray](#), although not without being the [cause](#) of "dreadful confusion" to [Margaret Mary](#), who, nevertheless, resolved to make the best of it and profited by the book for the spreading of her cherished devotion. [Moulins](#), with Mother de Soudeilles, [Dijon](#), with Mother de Saumaise and Sister Joly, Semur, with Mother Greyfié, and even [Paray](#), which had at first resisted, joined the movement. Outside of the Visitandines, [priests](#), religious, and [laymen](#) espoused the cause, particularly a [Capuchin](#), [Margaret Mary's](#) two brothers, and some [Jesuits](#), among the latter being Fathers Croiset and [Gallifet](#), who were destined to do so much for the devotion.

(8) The death of [Margaret Mary](#), 17 October 1690, did not dampen the ardour of those [interested](#); on the contrary, a short account of her life published by Father Croiset in 1691, as an appendix to his book "De la Dévotion au Sacré Cœur", served only to increase it. In spite of all sorts of obstacles, and of the slowness of the [Holy See](#), which in 1693 imparted [indulgences](#) to the Confraternities of the Sacred Heart and, in 1697, granted the [feast](#) to the Visitandines with the Mass of the [Five Wounds](#), but refused a [feast](#) common to all, with special [Mass](#) and [Office](#), the devotion spread, particularly in [religious](#) communities. The [Marseilles](#) plague, 1720, furnished perhaps the first occasion for a [solemn consecration](#) and public worship outside of [religious](#) communities. Other cities of the South followed the example of [Marseilles](#), and thus the devotion became a popular one. In 1726 it was deemed advisable once more to importune [Rome](#) for a [feast](#) with a [Mass](#) and [Office](#) of its own, but, in 1729, [Rome](#) again refused. However, in 1765, it finally yielded and that same year, at the request of the queen, the [feast](#) was received quasi officially by the [episcopate](#) of [France](#). On all sides it was asked for and obtained, and finally, in 1856, at the urgent entreaties of the [French bishops](#), [Pope Pius IX](#) extended the [feast](#) to the universal [Church](#) under the [rite](#) of double major. In 1889 it was raised by the [Church](#) to the double [rite](#) of first class. The acts of [consecration](#) and of [reparation](#) were everywhere introduced together with the devotion. Oftentimes, especially since about 1850, groups, congregations, and States have [consecrated](#) themselves to the Sacred Heart, and, in 1875, this [consecration](#) was made throughout the [Catholic](#) world. Still the [pope](#) did not wish to take the initiative or to intervene. Finally, on 11 June, 1899, by order of [Leo XIII](#), and with the formula prescribed by him, all [mankind](#) was [solemnly consecrated](#) to the Sacred Heart. The [idea](#) of this [act](#), which [Leo XIII](#) called "the great [act](#)" of his pontificate, had been proposed to him by a religious of the Good Shepherd from [Oporto](#) (Portugal) who said that she had received it from [Christ](#) Himself. She was a member of the Drost-zu-Vischering [family](#), and known in religion as Sister Mary of the Divine Heart. She died on the [feast](#) of the Sacred Heart, two days before the [consecration](#), which had been deferred to the following [Sunday](#). Whilst alluding to these great public manifestations we must not omit referring to the intimate life of the devotion in [souls](#), to the practices connected with it, and to the works and associations of which it was the very life. Moreover, we must not overlook the social character which it has assumed particularly of late years. The [Catholics](#) of [France](#), especially, cling firmly to it as one of their strongest [hopes](#) of ennoblement and [salvation](#).

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