

## DAY 18: The Immaculate Heart of Mary

Mary's role is to bring us face to face with the love in the Heart of Jesus crucified. But what if when we're there with him, "face to face," we don't feel moved? What if we stand before a crucifix, ponder the Lord's Passion, and feel little or nothing? What if our hearts are hard and insensitive because of our sins? This happens. We all sin, and sin hardens hearts. Aridity and desolation also happen, regardless of our sins. Whatever the reason, our hearts can be cold and unfeeling, and this can be a problem. Thankfully, the one who has a sinless, perfect, immaculate heart will help us. She'll give us her compassionate heart. She'll even let us live in her heart! If only we'll give her ours.

During our week with St. Louis de Montfort, we learned that when we consecrate ourselves to Mary, we give our whole selves to her, and Mary then gives her whole self to us. The emphasis that week was on merits: If we give our merits to Mary, she gives her merits to us. This is a marvelous thing. Yet Mother Teresa gives a bit of a different emphasis to all this. Her concern is with the heart. In other words, her version of a total consecration to Mary focuses on a kind of exchange of hearts: We give Mary our hearts, and she gives us her Immaculate Heart. For Mother Teresa, this gift of Mary's heart through consecration essentially means two things that are expressed by two simple prayers: "Lend me your heart" and "Keep me in your most pure heart."

First, "*Lend me your heart.*" By this prayer, Mother Teresa asked Our Lady to give her the love of her heart. In other words, she says, "Mary, help me to love with the perfect love of your Immaculate Heart." Remember, Mother Teresa's passionate desire was to satiate the thirst of Jesus for love, and she wanted to do this in the best way possible. What better way to love Jesus than with the perfect, humble, immaculate Heart of his mother? Here, Mother Teresa found the secret to living out her vocation to the full: "Mary, lend me your Immaculate Heart."

But can Mary really give us her heart? Of course, there's something piously poetic in this idea. Yet there's truth in it. When Mother Teresa often said to Mary, "Lend me your heart," she meant it. Did she suppose that the physical organ of her heart would be removed from her body and that Mary would come down from heaven and give her hers? Of course not. The physical organ of the heart is itself but a symbol of a deeper, spiritual reality. "The heart" refers to one's inner life and the seat of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit. Now we come to the heart of the heart of the matter.

Recall our week with St. Maximilian Kolbe and how he emphasized the bond between the Holy Spirit and Mary. He said that Mary is the spouse of the Holy Spirit and that their union goes even deeper than a spousal union. He went on to say things like this: "The Holy Spirit does not act except through the Immaculata, his spouse. Hence, she is the Mediatrix of all the graces of the Holy Spirit." So, if we want to love Jesus completely, ardently, and perfectly — as did Mother Teresa — then we need his Spirit of Love, and Mary Immaculate brings him to us. Let

us pray, "Mary, lend us your Heart. Bring us the Spirit. Pray that our hardened hearts would burn with love for Jesus. Help set our hearts on fire with love for him."

The second prayer is "*Keep me in your most pure heart.*" Or, stated more fully, one prays, "Immaculate Heart of Mary, keep me in your most pure heart, so that I may please Jesus through you, in you, and with you." This part of Mother Teresa's consecration to Mary is the most profound. She's not just asking for Mary's heart to be in her but for her to be in Mary's heart! So, this is a prayer to love Jesus through Mary, in Mary, and with Mary. This is something more than simply having Mary lend us her heart. To understand and live it requires a loving dependence and profound union with Mary. The day after tomorrow, we'll cover what this means and how we get there. Tomorrow, we'll learn more about Mary's attitude of heart.

Today's Prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, Living in Mary.*

*Keep me in her most pure and Immaculate Heart.*