



THE STATE OF THE DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS IN THE PHILIPPINES

and a Young Person's Response

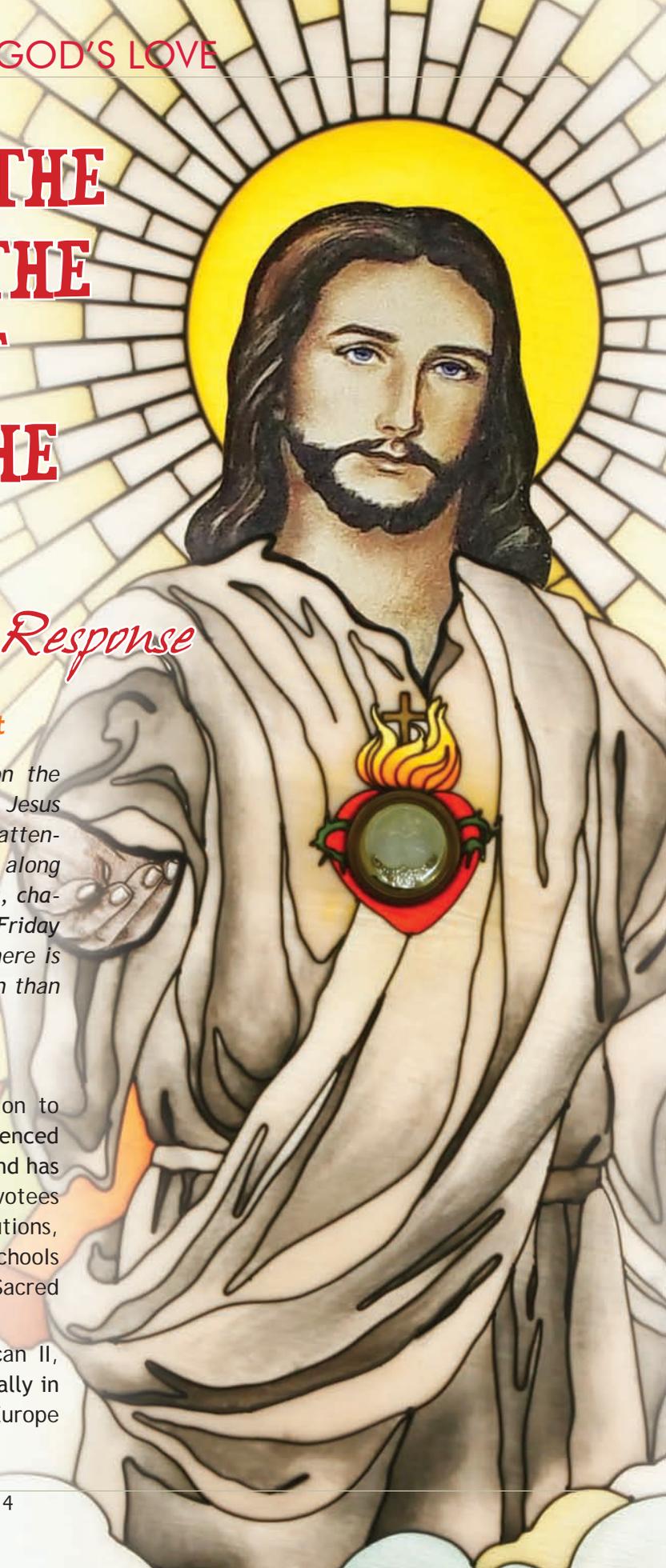
By Fr. Sal Putzu, SDB and Vieve Cenit

Fr. Salvatore Putzu's position paper on the "State of the Devotion to Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Philippines" immediately caught my attention. After all, I consider myself a devotee, along with many other Filipinos who fill churches, chapels or even office areas to celebrate First Friday Masses. But as I read on, I realized that there is so much more to the Sacred Heart devotion than I first thought.

BACKGROUND

For more than three centuries, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has deeply influenced popular religiosity in the Catholic Church, and has molded the spiritual life of millions of devotees throughout the world. Hundreds of institutions, such as religious congregations, parishes, schools and charitable works were named after the Sacred Heart.

However, since the conclusion of Vatican II, the devotion has gradually declined, especially in the Western world (Western and Central Europe and North America).



THE PRESENT SITUATION

A good number of Central and South American countries and especially the Philippines have been happy exceptions to this unfortunate trend.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart is clearly manifested in the abundance of statues and paintings of the Sacred Heart; the number of schools and parishes and other organizations named after him; the substantial membership in the Apostleship of Prayer and *Adoracion Nocturna*, and the devotional practices such as the nine First Friday Masses, the Holy Hour and the praying of the Morning Offering by millions of Catholics in these countries.

However, if we focus on the Philippines, we discover several negative features, the main ones of which are the following:

- Among many Filipinos, the devotion to the Sacred Heart is mostly sentimental, often superficial and external (as it is limited mostly to the wearing of scapulars and medals and use of images and statues in their houses) but is not accompanied by an authentic and committed Christian life.
- The number of young people who show a special love for the Sacred Heart has decreased and appears to be declining fast. While other devotions are on the rise, the devotion to the Sacred Heart, especially among the young, appears to be headed in the opposite direction.
- Various attempts to revive interest in and give substance to the devotion and pass it on to the young generations have been largely unsuccessful.

This is a worrisome situation and trend.

I belong to the generation of the young people who have very little knowledge of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, and of everything concerning Faith and Church. Our generation is more familiar with the Kpop and Hollywood stars than it is with Jesus. We know concert schedules by heart, but are oblivious to the feasts celebrated by the Catholic Church. We want to follow every twist

and turn in the lives of celebrities, rather than follow the examples that Jesus taught us. When I asked a friend if she had a devotion to the Sacred Heart, she answered almost apologetically that she thought only older people, like her aunt and grandmother, did. It is alarming that we associate religious devotion with a certain age group, when in fact, it is a gift to all.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

If such a trend continues, we have reason to fear that, with regard to this devotion, within one generation or two, the Philippines may find itself in the same situation as the European and North American nations in the post-Vatican II era.

SOMETHING NEEDS TO BE DONE TO STEM THE TIDE AND REVERSE THE TREND.

Hence, the proposals that follow:

A TO RELAUNCH THE DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS through a variety of well-focused, well-coordinated and complementary initiatives/activities that include the following:

- The introduction (or re-introduction) of the enthronement of the Sacred Heart in all families;
- The introduction (or re-introduction) of the recitation of the Chaplet in honor of the Sacred Heart;
- An updating of the C.O.R (Conversion, Offering and Reparation requested by the Sacred Heart himself) spirituality, according to the development proposed by Pope John Paul II in his numerous interventions on this topic;
- A revival of the awareness of the content of the Promises of the Sacred Heart;
- The dissemination of a new form of the “Morning Offering,” which includes the “offering” composed by Pope John Paul II, and which is not limited to the members of the Apostleship of Prayer, but can be recited by any Catholic and at any time of the day.
- A carpet spreading of the (Morning) Daily Offer-

ing in all families, schools, religious organizations and media;



—The introduction of the three prayers/offering in honor of the Sacred Heart in the morning, noontime and evening;

— The creation and dissemination of good publications through print medium and a more robust presence in

traditional and social media that spread the knowledge of the essence of this devotion and of its solid theological foundation.

— The creation of a sodality or club, or *barkada* in every parish and school, reserved for children and young people, with the purpose of fostering devotion and promoting practical activities in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

I must admit that when I started attending the first Friday Masses, I was unaware that these Masses were in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Providentially, I became a member of one of the Church ministries which guided me in deepening my appreciation of the devotion. But learning of the many other (very doable) ways of honoring the Sacred Heart is indeed a wonderful surprise.

B TO CONNECT THE RELAUNCHING OF THE DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART TO THE DEVOTION TO THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

Since the eighteenth century, the devotion to the Sacred Heart has been closely connected to that of the Immaculate Heart



of Mary. There have been exaggerations and even aberration in this area (e.g. the inaccurate term “Twin Hearts”), but the best rectification is to propagate authentic devotion to the TWO Hearts, properly grounded on sound theological and pastoral basis.

In the Year of the Two Hearts, we renewed our consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. On 8 June 2013, the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, we also made our National Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. These two “consecrations” should not be viewed as isolated events, but as highlights of a lasting disposition of our devotion to the hearts of Jesus and Mary Most Holy, who is his and our Mother.



C TO INTRODUCE (or re-introduce) THE DEVOTION TO THE EVER FAITHFUL HEART OF JOSEPH

Devotion to St. Joseph also was very popular in the Catholic Church for many centuries. Since Vatican II, however, this devotion has undergone an almost complete eclipse.

Something important seems to be lacking in the world of our “popular devotions” and religiosity if St. Joseph is not included in them. This is the appropriate time to re-launch the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. All three formed the Holy Family of Nazareth. Our families need such an inspiring model, which finds its unity in Jesus.

The addition of the novel qualifier “Ever-Faithful” referring to St. Joseph in the Eucharistic Prayer seems to be most appropriate in our time, when many of our families’ members lack faithfulness to God and to one another.

God entrusted St. Joseph with the protection of the Child Jesus and the Virgin Mary, and indeed

he has shown to us that he is worthy of the Church's special devotion as he is of the titles: *The Spouse of the Mother of God, the chaste Guardian of the Virgin Mary, the foster-father of the Son of God, the watchful Defender of Christ and the Head of the Holy Family.*



Jesus will have immense beneficial effects on every aspect of the life of the devotees, their families, and the country, as a whole. It will promote justice, peace, forgiveness, reconciliation, compassion, generosity, sharing and solidarity. It will promote a "REBIRTH OF OUR HOMELAND" even as it prepares to celebrate the 500th Anniversary of the arrival of the Christian Faith to our shores.

D TO LAUNCH THE MOVEMENT OF "THE ALLIANCE OF A BILLION HEARTS"

The love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, The Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Ever Faithful Heart of Joseph find its natural completion and response in the love that each Catholic (and actually, every Christian) should feel for them, for the Blessed Trinity, and for all mankind.

Only a love that involves all of us and which responds in practice to the love of God in such a "circular form" can be considered complete. Such "inclusive love" will necessarily lead to practical commitments to live by the Faith that we profess.

E TO CONNECT THE RE-LAUNCHING OF THESE DEVOTIONS TO THE ONGOING EFFORT TO PROMOTE A "NEW EVANGELIZATION"

Jesus Christ who is the same yesterday, today and forever is the core of the New Evangelization. And the core of Jesus Christ is His his love for the Father and all mankind, symbolized most appropriately by his HEART.

Just as Christ's love is the heart of the Good News of our Salvation, so should our love of loving response to him through our devotion to His Heart be an integral part of the Good News of the New Evangelization.

LOOKING BEYOND THE LIMITED HORIZON OF THE PHILIPPINES

The re-launching and the "enlargement" and deepening of our devotion to the Sacred Heart of

As a young person, who has personally encountered Jesus in moments of grace through the sacraments, especially the Blessed Sacrament, devotions, activities and works in the company of like-minded friends, I eagerly look forward to participating in an intensified drive to re-launch the devotion to the Sacred Heart and restore it to its rightful place as the most venerated of Catholic devotions. I am likewise challenged to help promote the allied devotions to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Ever-Faithful Heart of St. Joseph



among Filipino families, but most especially, among the youth. I pray that there will be many more of us who would be ready and willing to be messengers of his Divine Love; ready and willing not only to speak of his infinite love and mercy but also to live as true devotees whose hearts beat as one with his Sacred Heart.

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