

How the SACRED HEART OF JESUS *Fixes Things*

Dear Friends of the Heart of Christ,

One of my childhood memories that I like to recall are the times when my twin sister and I would ride the roller coaster at the amusement park a few miles from our home. My dad would sit between the two of us on the roller coaster's seat with his arms around our shoulders and off we'd go. This particular ride was quite thrilling—not the kind that loops around in a complete circle—but, nonetheless, very, very fast and with exhilarating drops from considerable heights. It was over in minutes but was exceedingly addictive for those who loved the trill of feeling like they could nearly fly. People would re-ride it time and again. Regardless of the hair-raising speed of it, we felt the security of my Father's arms tightly around us and his very presence made the ride a double delight... an apt image, I believe, of our heavenly Father's protective presence as we go through the ups and downs of life.

Life is like a roller coaster, don't you think! The vicissitudes of life, that is, the variations in circumstances or fortunes at different times in your life, are always with us and can be very stressful. A former superior of ours used to say, "Nothing too good or too bad lasts too long." I often recall these words especially when hard times hit and difficulties appear, sometimes out of the blue. But it is precisely at these times that the Sacred Heart of Jesus wants us to lean more heavily on him—the GREAT FIXER—of all our seemingly impossible dilemmas.

St. Margaret Mary was often petitioned by her family, especially her two brothers, for prayers as they faced complex situations in their lives. Her brother Chrysostom, who was the mayor of a small French town, frequently wrote to our saint whose prayers and intercessory powers he believed were powerful before the throne of God. Margaret Mary writes to him these words in June, 1689, in response to his letter to her:

Would that time permitted me, beloved brother, to express my sentiments in your regard. You would see that the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ gives you these holy inspirations only because of the ardent love He bears you, which makes Him want to possess your heart unreservedly and completely. See to it that He can, in so far as your calling permits it. He asks no more. But although you are unable to carry out all these good desires, He is going to reward you just as though you had put them all into effect. O, how this divine Heart loves you, my dear brother!... He wants me to assure you of that. You must never lose confidence in His goodness...

From this letter we understand that Margaret Mary's brother was very dear to her and that she desired him to grow in holiness. He was a civil servant consumed by the cares of his office and family. But our saint wants him to know that the Sacred Heart loves him intensely, and she exhorts him to do all he can within his daily duties to think of God's presence and to trust in the merciful goodness of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Praying to the Sacred Heart will not necessarily mean that everything in life will go smoothly, but it does mean that when we turn to Him and place our confidence in Him, His love and power can fix even the darkest trials. This, I think, is wonderfully illustrated by the following story. This excerpt is taken from the book, *Father Arseny: Cloud of Witnesses*. The book correlates the stories of men and women who knew this Russian Orthodox priest who had suffered in the Soviet prison camps. His profound example of prayer and charity touched the hearts of many people who looked to him for spiritual guidance. The following story is told by one of his penitents Ilya Nikolaevich:

I was sent to the strict regime camp without permission to correspond, just like everyone else. It was either that or being shot to death in camp. In the beginning it was difficult, especially since my last name is German, Schneider. Many hated me for it, but after about three months I found my place in camp society.

Someone once told me, "You see that man standing over there? He is a priest, and he is constantly helping everyone. We can't understand why he does that. His name is Father Arseny." He was the first priest I had ever met in my life, and he had such a special way of living. I got interested, so I went over to him and said, "Good evening, Father Arseny!"

"Good evening," he answered, and that was the beginning of the friendship between a priest and an ex-political worker, and officer in the frontier guards. Everything that happens in life is according to God's Wisdom. Father Arseny told me many interesting things I had never heard about. I could remember it all in my intellect but it did not penetrate into my soul. We spent five years in the same barracks and suddenly I was sent to the Ninth Camp. It was big and we had to dig for ore deep in the mines. The first time I was lowered down into one it was rather scary. There was dim light in the main galleries, but no light at all in the shafts; the only light there came from the lamp on your own forehead. I worked there for five months and began to understand the planning of it all. I saw that everything had been done carelessly and in a hurry, that the supports of galleries were poorly made. Piles of wood designated as pit props were left on the ground. Safety rules were not obeyed. You could say nothing, you couldn't give advice, you were a zek (prisoner). If you talked, you were lucky if all they did was to hit you in the face with a fist; they could also send you to the punishment cell...

We were following a sinuous rift in the stratum and a special brigade had been assigned to put the supports in place. One morning we went down into the mine and started work. The rock was giving off gravel, and suddenly we heard a loud cracking sound and a powerful blast of air knocked me to the ground. From there I could see an enormous boulder falling onto me. It was coming down slowly, and then stopped. I was lying as though in a pen case a foot and a half high, three feet wide; my left leg had been pinioned. From under the rubble you could hear moaning. Right next to me the zek Shiraev had been crushed by something big and was screaming desperately; then he grew quiet, and died. Moaning and crying went on for awhile, and then there was complete silence. I called out, I screamed, but nobody answered. There I was, lying in this 'pen case' and could even raise myself up onto my elbows, but I could not turn over because of my leg. I put the lamp out, and it became pitch dark. There was absolutely no hope of me being saved, and the most terrible thing was that death would be slow in coming and painful. What could I do? Well, there was nothing to do. I went through a period of despair, but then I remembered my talks in the barracks with Father Arseny. I knew about his deep faith in God and a thought came to me for the first time: If a man like Father Arseny believes in God, this means that He exists, and I started praying ardently, remembering everything Father Arseny had said.

I lay there and I prayed and I repeated, "O, Lord, help me! Help me, O Lord"—hundreds of times. My left leg hurt, but while I was praying I fell asleep. I woke up and I felt terribly thirsty, but of course there was no water. I was helpless and my leg was hurting more and more but God gave me the strength to keep on praying, and I gathered all my spiritual willpower to enter into the words of my prayer. The pain grew less, I was no longer thirsty, nor was I hungry. I was dressed rather warmly, since it was always very cold in the mine, so I was wearing everything I owned to conserve the warmth of my body. I do not know how long I lay there; I was constantly passing from one state to the other: I was either praying or I was sleeping.

All of a sudden I heard the sound of a pneumatic drill and the scraping of shovels, and very soon afterward I was unearthed. I found out then that I had survived in this spot, without food or water for seven days. My leg may have hurt, but there was no wound. I was surprised that when they pulled me out and gave me two mugs of water to drink, they started interrogating me: "What happened? Why?" But then they very quickly stopped all that and sent me to a hospital. I had gone down that mine an atheist, but came out a true believer thanks to God's mercy and to the spiritual work Father Arseny had so thoughtfully performed for such a long time.

Seventeen people died in that accident. I was the only one to survive from my brigade. A mine engineer—himself a zek—told me that in his experience and in all the literature he had read, he never heard of anyone ever surviving seven days without food or water at near-freezing temperatures. God, through the prayers of Father Arseny and through His great mercy, performed a miracle and saved me.

How many times in our lives we are confronted by situations that look dark and forboding, bringing us to the point of desolation and sometimes despair. Instead of turning our backs on God and the Church as some are doing—even renouncing their baptism and apostasizing—we need to turn even more resolutely to the Lord, to his Sacred Heart who can make all things right again. Life's problems may appear insurmountable and we may feel overwhelmed by them. Yet, the mercy of the Heart of Jesus is waiting to be released upon us, if we but place our confidence in Him. The Heart of Jesus promised us through St. Margaret Mary the He would triumph over all obstacles that impede His Divine Plans for us. Do we really believe that? Do we really trust Him? Here are some enlightening words of Jesus (found in the book *In Sinu Jesu*) that we should ponder when we feel that life is out of control and that we desperately need a heavenly "fix" to straighten things out.

—There are no obstacles over which My love cannot triumph. My love is a victorious love, even when all appears sunken in defeat and bound in the fetters of death. I am the God who brings new life out of what is old, decayed, and buried. I am the God who renews all those things upon which My gaze rests. I am the God for whom nothing is impossible and whom all things obey. Trust, then, in My love for you, and go forward. (pp 203-4)

—Trust is the key that opens all the treasures of My merciful and infinitely loving Heart. I am touched by a single act of trust in My merciful love more than by a multitude of good works. The soul who trusts in Me allows Me to work freely in her life. The soul who trusts Me, by that very fact removes the obstacles of pride and self-determination that impede My freedom of action. There is nothing I will not do for the soul who abandons herself to Me in a simple act of trust. (p. 139)

—There are so many lesser things that pull you away, that eat up your time, and that put stumbling blocks in the path of your coming to Me. Learn to recognize these obstacles for what they are. Some of them are your own doing; others are the work of the Evil One; still others come from the ordinary cares of life in a world that has forgotten how to be still in My presence. Do not let yourself be stopped by any of these things. Learn to come to Me quickly, generously, and gladly. I wait for you in the Sacrament of My love, and you will not be disappointed in coming to Me. This is really all I ask of souls, and especially of My priests—that they come to Me. And I will do the rest. (p. 104)

—My Mother is the agent of all healing, the chosen instrument of the Holy Spirit for the restoration of life, of light, and of unity in every place or instance where these are lacking. Not until this sovereign disposition of My Father is recognized and confessed will there be the healing, purification, and sanctification of the priesthood and of the Church for which so many souls labor and offer themselves. None of these objectives can be obtained by human means, or even by spiritual ones, apart from the role that belongs to My Mother and to none other, because she alone is the Immaculate and, so, is alone the human instrument fit for the workings of the Holy Spirit. (p. 98)

In order for us to obtain the Divine help we need in so many confusing events around us, in the frantic pace of life we encounter each week, in our most hopeless and depressing situations, we must give permission to the Divine Heart of Jesus to unleash his power in our lives. We must respond to Jesus' invitation to "Come to Me" as He has encouraged us to do in the Gospels, and gathering all our interior strength, humbly beg Him to enter into our hearts and take over our lives. Then with our consent, our trust and our openness to His will, the treasures of His Heart can begin to penetrate our hearts and transform our lives. +

This talk on Sacred Heart spirituality was given in our Gathering Room on August 4, 2019. If you would like to attend similar presentations by the sisters, our next talks will be held on Sunday, October 6, 2019 at 4:00 pm.