

# Reflection for the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

There are over one thousand references to the word 'heart' in the Bible and only a rare few intend the heart as a physical organ. For the most part 'heart' is used in a symbolic, metaphorical way. In most of these references heart carries the sense of the whole person, the very essence, the real or true self, the person in their innermost depths.



In the Christian Scriptures Jesus is presented as a man of heart and, as his life and ministry unfold, he is presented as compassion personified. God is love and Jesus is love incarnate; his life exemplifies what it is to be on earth the heart of God. John concludes the prologue to his gospel with these words: 'No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son who is close to the Father's heart who has made him known.'



One of the classic texts of Jesus' life giving love for us comes from John's Gospel: 'One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear and at once blood and water came out.' (Jn 19.34) The blood and water flowing from the side of Jesus (his life source) has come to symbolise Jesus, in an ultimate sense, giving his whole self to us, that is, opening the riches of his heart for us. The wounded side gives us open access to the heart as it were. When we gaze on the one whom they have pierced we see not just Jesus in the last moments of his life; we see rather his whole life, we recall how he poured himself out, compassionately reaching out to everyone, especially those most in need of his embrace.

**Spend some time reflecting on or sharing the story of one of the times Jesus was moved with compassion or told a story about being moved with compassion. For example:**

When he saw the widow – Lk 7.13

A Samaritan traveller – Lk 10.33

The leper – Mk 1.41

When he saw the large crowd – Mk 6.34

Jesus said: 'I am moved with compassion...' Mk 8.2

When he touched the two blind men – Mt 20.34



The story we tell about Jesus needs to be consistent with this rich scriptural tradition of love. It is a profoundly relational story. The God Jesus reveals is a God who is both personal and transcendent, a God of love, a God who is against all dehumanisation or disfigurement of God's creatures, a God who is sympathetic to human suffering. Jesus' life, death and resurrection reveals, symbolises and exemplifies that God's loving presence has always been present in

creation. And, as he experienced his oneness with God, he learnt that unconditional, self-expansive love was the only way to experience the reign of God.

And what is true for Jesus is also true for all humanity. 'A new consciousness has enfolded the world. The human is now the home of the divine.' (O'Leary) God's presence is accessible everywhere in everyone's everyday experience – freely accessible, freely available. No intermediaries are needed. There is no place, no anywhere, that is not infused with God's presence.



A spirituality of the heart is all about love; the love God has for us present since the beginning of creation but made known in the Scriptures and brought to full realisation in Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus not only makes known God's all-embracing compassionate love, he is also the perfect example of what it is to be a loving human being. Following the example of Jesus we enter our own heart and discover there God's love; and,

confident and deeply immersed in God's love for us we are invited to go out and be on earth the heart of God.

Extracts from ***Our Great Love Story: Spirituality of the Heart*** by Phil Fitzgerald

O Fire of God, transform us,  
Burn away all hardness of heart.  
Free, O set free the fire within us.  
Break down the walls we have built.  
Let your fire leap through our resistance over the walls of  
our hearts and out into a world yearning for transformation.  
Burn into our hearts these words of Jesus,  
"I have come to light a fire on the earth;  
how I wish the blaze were ignited!" (Luke 12:49)  
*"The Circle of Life" Joyce Rupp & Macrina Wiederkehr p153*

Spirit of Life, come unto me  
Sing in my heart all the stirrings of compassion.  
Blow in the wind, rise in the sea  
Move in the hand giving life the shape of  
justice.  
Roots hold me close, wings set me free.  
Spirit of Life, come to me  
Come to me.  
*"Spirit of Life" a song by Carolyn McDade*

Ground of All Being  
Breath of All Life  
Spirit within all things  
Open our eyes  
Open our ears,  
Stir in our hearts,  
Awaken our minds,  
And then we will bend low  
And then we will know  
that all is holy, all is one  
All is holy, Holy One.  
*"Ground of All Being" a song by Jan*