

Let us be channels of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

June 3, 2023



Dear brothers and sisters,

June is the month dedicated to the devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. On June 16th, we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus which is a feast most special for the Diocese of Whitehorse since it is the feast of our Cathedral in Whitehorse and of the Sacred Heart Mission at Mile 295, in Northern BC.

As Christians, we seek to imitate Christ in all we are and all we do. For centuries, year after year, our enduring tradition has allowed us to deepen our faith as individuals, as families, and as a community. We center our lives on Christ through the integration of customs, devotions, and celebrations. This month of June, I desire that we reflect on the significance of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for every one of us.

The pierced heart that we see in the image of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus underlines the violence and suffering Christ endured during his Passion on the Cross. The sacrifice of the Lord demonstrates that true love consists of total self-giving regardless of the cost. Such love which suffers to unite all is truly a perfect love. The heart represents this immense love which unites God's fatherly love to human love, through Christ's filial love. In a homily preached in Vancouver in September 1984, St. John Paul II said: "During the whole of Jesus' earthly life, his Heart was the center in which was manifested, in a human way, the love of God: the love of God the Son, and, through the Son, the love of God the Father." God willed not only to reveal to us divine love, but He has invited us to share in His infinite mercy.

Through our baptism in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit - as represented by the flames in the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus - we have received this power to become children of God. We thus can be filled with the very same love that has vanquished death and conquered all fears. It is the only love that can bring salvation, fullness of life, and ultimate peace and joy.

Looking into Christ's compassionate love we reflect on the very nature of God. Pope Francis says: "The Heart of Christ is the tenderness of God." (*Basilica of Saint John Lateran, Friday, 12 June 2015*) The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is crowned with thorns, and while suffering it loves to the end. Let us take courage from the Heart of Jesus to welcome and protect life in all stages and from all dangers. Let our thorns not discourage us from doing what is right but in contemplating Jesus' passion, let us respond fully to our calling. We are called to live a wholly Christian life, with all our daily decisions founded and rooted in God's love and in His plan. It is really God's plan that we protect and defend.

Emboldened by the Heart of Jesus and illuminated by the wisdom of the Church, we testify to God's love. United in compassion, we witness to our children that there is no life outside of God's life. Human-made ideologies, ideas, and theories represented in popular culture may entice us, but they will not help us fulfill our design as children of God. In this month of June, I pray that we all, from the very young to the elderly, will be deeply moved by Christ's compassion and that we will entrust our lives to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

In this month of June, I encourage all of you to shine this truth as each of us can in our own reality. Parents, bring children closer to the Heart of Jesus and show them Christ's true love. Pastors and leaders, warmly welcome and gather all parishioners in prayer around the Heart of Jesus. Healthcare workers, educators, teachers, and all of us in the Diocese of Whitehorse, let us strive to be living images of Jesus, to be His hands to protect life and creation without any hesitation and to be channels of charity and hope.

I pray that during the month of June, and throughout the year, we may celebrate our Catholic identity in Christ, let His light shine, and let ourselves be channels of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for all!

"Lord Jesus Christ, King of love and Prince of peace reign in our hearts and in our homes. Conquer all the powers of evil and bring us to share in the victory of your Sacred Heart. May all we say and do give glory and praise to you and to the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God living and reigning for ever and ever." St. John Paul II. India, 1996

Always yours, in the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, our Lord.

+ Bishop Héctor Vila

Bishop of the Diocese of Whitehorse