Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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"Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt 11:29).

Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

Dt 7:6-11; *1 Jn 4:7-16*; *Mt 11:25-30*

Today's Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus gained liturgical status in the late 17th century, but popular devotion existed before that for people who wanted more than doctrinal ideas about the mystery of Jesus as both human and divine.

In Jesus, God has a human heart. Jesus brings God into human life, especially the feelings and needs that characterize human relationships. We can never say that God has not experienced our human condition, the joys and fears, triumphs and losses of ordinary life. Jesus knew the whole range of human need and suffering, and because he is God, he brought this dimension of our lives into the divine life. Every human experience is now an encounter with God.

The Gospels tell us that Jesus felt life deeply and exposed his heart to the sufferings of others. He wept at the death of his friend, Lazarus. He was moved to the depths of his being when he encountered lepers and the poor widow whose son had died. He wept again as he looked out over the city of Jerusalem, knowing the suffering to come because its leaders would not listen. He felt the tenderness of a mother hen gathering her chicks under her wings to protect them. He knew the love of the shepherd who would not leave a single lost sheep in the wilderness.

A “sacred heart” is no easy way of being. To feel the needs and sufferings of others is to be vulnerable to their plight and moved by their desperation. We normally try hard to distance ourselves from those in trouble. We wish them well but cannot stop to get involved. As the chaos of life swirls around us and pulls others into its storms, we seek the shelter of our own inner circle, afraid to even imagine the burdens others are facing.

Jesus revealed a God whose heart is mercy itself, moved to compassion that expands until the divine heart breaks with the broken hearted and plunges into sorrow with the grief-stricken. Jesus not only immersed himself in our human condition, he carried our damaged lives, inner contradictions, self-inflicted wounds and sinfulness to the cross, so we might be free to live life as God intended.

Spiritual writer Fr. Ed Farrell once shared these words from an Irish housekeeper at a parish in Detroit: “Ah, Father, it’s a poor Irishman that doesn’t know that life will break your heart.” This feast is for those who have lived long enough to know that life will break your heart. How else can we be ready to carry one another in times of sorrow? We need look no further than our own relationships to find the many ways that love will pull us apart and make us tender enough to hold the human stories all

around us.

Then, when we meet God, we will recognize that divine love has always been with us, consoling and challenging us. How can it be otherwise? Our way to God is through the mystery of the human heart.