

Thoughts on the Daily Word

9th Week of the Year. *Friday 7th June. Solemnity Sacred Heart of Jesus.*

Readings: Hosea 11:1,3-4,8-9; Psalm: Isaiah 12; Ephesians 3:8-12,14-19; John 19:31-37.

The heart is what makes us real human beings. It keeps the engine of our humanity going. Without it our brain couldn't function and nor could all the other bits that allow us to be alive and kicking. The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus goes back at least to medieval times but it really took off to the point of special statues in almost every church after the Reformation. The French Catholic renewal of the 16th and 17th centuries that largely formed the life of the church as we know it today had at its heart this devotion to the fully human Christ. St Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690) is the most famous saint associated with the devotion to the Heart of Jesus.

Since its earliest times the church has faced attempts to dehumanise Christ and just make him an idea, a concept, or a series of rules, not personal and truly alive. Ultimately this destroys the capacity for love and mercy. The heresies that the church has faced since the beginning are usually called 'gnosticism' and 'pelagianism'. Pope Francis' Exhortation called 'Gaudete et Exultate – on the call to holiness in today's world', once again describes the presence of these heresies in today's world. Today's prayer and devotion is not just about sentimentality or feelings but a real recognition of the centrality of the humanity of Jesus. This devotion leads us to embracing not only our human journey but all the needs of our brother and sisters on the same journey. As Pope Francis tells us, it is the reality of mercy that touches our hearts that brings our faith alive.