

The Josephites and Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Saint Joseph

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The Society of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart, the Josephites, is a pontifical clerical society of apostolic life. It is a society of priests and brothers founded by Cardinal Herbert Vaughan, archbishop of Westminster. Vaughan brought a group of priests to Baltimore, Maryland, in 1871 to form a mission society devoted to ministry to the newly freed slaves. In 1893 they reorganized to create an American institution, The Society of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart.

Vaughan dedicated the society to Saint Joseph following a novena he made in his honor prior to the founding of the society. In doing so, he was placing it under the care of that very one who is honored as the first Christian missionary, who took Jesus and Mary to Egypt shortly after the birth of our Lord, because it was through the intercession of Saint Joseph, God granted his request.

Also, Cardinal Vaughan, a man of exceptional and sincere humility, was a true devotee of the Sacred Heart of Jesus whose devotion was spreading widely in the years prior to the foundation of the Josephites. The humility and meekness of the Sacred Heart of Jesus attracted Vaughan to this devotion. As a result, when he founded the Josephite Society, he consecrated it to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He saw the mission of the Josephites as that which demands true love for Jesus and absolute humility. Our Lord exhorts us to “Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart.” (Matthew 11:29). Thus, every Josephite is called to fill themselves with like humility, for it is a key virtue in this special apostolate.

In our consecration to the Sacred Heart, the Josephites seek above all things by daily meditation and prayer the priceless gift of divine love. This devotion to the Fountain of Love urges the members to undertake all manner of labors and sufferings in His service and to consider nothing too hard or too much which can promote His honor and glory and extend His kingdom.

Because of our dependence on the Sacred Heart in our apostolate, Josephites have special prayers in our prayer manual which are prayed before the Blessed Sacrament. The prayers include: Josephite Dedication to the Sacred Heart, The Act of Reparation, The Act of Consecration, and The Litany of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Novena and Feast of the Sacred Heart

The solemn feast of the Sacred Heart has been in the Roman Catholic Liturgical Calendar since 1856, and is celebrated 19 days after Pentecost. Most people say the novena to the Sacred Heart nine days before the feast. The image of the Sacred Heart is often depicted as a flaming heart shining with light, pierced by the lance-wound, surrounded by a crown of thorns, surmounted by a cross and bleeding. The novena time is truly an opportunity of receiving tremendous grace from the Sacred Heart. It is at this time Josephites rededicate and recommit themselves to the Sacred Heart and pray for all those in need of special favors from His divine Heart. The feast moves every year based on the Feast of Pentecost. This year it falls on June 19, 2009.

The promises of the Sacred Heart to all devotees

For those who have devotion to and consecrate their lives to this most Sacred Heart, are promised all the graces necessary for their state in life, peace in their families, consolation in all troubles, and a refuge in life and especially at death. For sinners, this Heart will be the source of an infinite ocean of mercy, and tepid souls shall become fervent. He promised to bless places where the image of his Heart is enthroned, and priests devoted to the Sacred Heart will have power to touch the most hardened hearts. For those who promote this devotion, their names shall eternally be written in His Sacred Heart, hence they will be blessed to die in the state of grace.

What a precious gift we have in the Sacred Heart! As Josephites, we pray with confidence:

Jesus meek and humble of heart, make our hearts like unto Thine.