

OUR LADY OF THE SACRED HEART – CANBERRA – REFLECTION FOR MASS

Today we are celebrating the feast day of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. “Who is Our Lady of the Sacred Heart?”

The name, **Our Lady of the Sacred Heart**, focuses attention on the extraordinary and unique relationship between Mary and her Son, a relationship of deep union between the Heart of Jesus and that of his mother. This is a **relationship** that can be called “**Oneness in Heart**”. This is who Our Lady of the Sacred Heart is... She is **One with the Heart of Jesus**.

Mary’s union with her Son was so deep and all-embracing that she was one with his mind and heart in all things and at all times.

Mary is not a distant, unattainable model, one who is a stranger to the joys and sorrows that make up our life. We can run the risk of putting her on a pedestal and removing her from our human situation. Mary does not put herself on a pedestal, but rather, close to us, where we suffer, and where so many in our world are struggling to survive. She knows, she understands and she shares our sufferings with us. Mary is our **companion** on the journey of life, on the journey of discipleship.

Jesus will always listen to her prayers on our behalf. If we pray to her, she will entrust each of us to the Heart of her Son, who will embrace us with his compassionate love.

In the many statues and images of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, the hands of both Jesus and Mary have a message for us. **Mary is always pointing to the Heart of her Son**, to tell us of the immense love Jesus has for each one of us and of his invitation for us to come to his Heart.

Jesus is always pointing to his Mother and to his own Heart, entrusting us to her loving care and inviting us to go to her if we want to understand how greatly he loves us.

This beginning of a new parish dedicated to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart challenges us to re-examine our relationship with Mary, to acknowledge that perhaps we take her for granted or even forget her. We are being challenged to respond to her anew, with deeper love and trust, confident that she will help us to live our daily lives in “oneness of heart with Jesus”.

How then to respond to this challenge. As we heard in today’s gospel reading, we find the answer on Calvary. When hanging on the Cross, Jesus said to the beloved disciple standing with Mary beneath the Cross, “Behold your Mother”. In response to these words, the beloved disciple immediately made a place for Mary in his home.

What does it really mean to make a place for Mary in our home? To welcome Our Lady of the Sacred Heart into our home does not just mean placing her statue or picture in some central position, it does not mean naming schools, hospitals and yes, even parishes after her. To do all this is certainly good but it is only the exterior expression of a deeper reality.

To truly welcome Mary into our home is to welcome her into the centre of our life, into our heart. This means that we must have an interior attitude which is open to her, available to her, listening to her. It is to recognise that she is someone for us and that she has much to share with us.

If we are willing to journey with her in the way of faith, trusting in her guidance and prayer for us, we can be certain of being able to live in deep union with the Heart of Jesus, her Son.

It is important to be aware that the title of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart is not just the name of your parish. It is much more than this. God has called you to be a member of this particular parish and this means he has entrusted each of you to his mother, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, in a special way. She is to be your mother and your companion along the journey of life, along the journey of discipleship.

So, to help this challenge become a reality for you, I want to leave you with a question for your reflection and prayer.

- 1 How important is Mary in your life. Jesus shared his life with Mary; do you share your life with her? Have you taken Mary into the home of your heart?

Let yourself be challenged as you retrace how Mary has been present in your life. Can you remember when you were first introduced to Mary as a child or at some other moment?

