

August - The Immaculate Heart of Mary

“You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace.”
(Words of Our Lady to the visionaries at Fatima on 13th July 1917)

Traditionally the month of August has been dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The beginnings of a regular devotion to the Immaculate Heart may be evident in the eleventh and twelfth centuries but two events accelerated its practice. The first involves the Apparitions to St. Catherine Labouré at the “Rue du Bac” in Paris when Our Lady gave the world the Miraculous Medal. The second was the establishment and work of a Society dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary at the Church of Our Lady of Victories in Paris in 1836.

In the twentieth century new impetus was provided by the appearance of the Blessed Virgin to three children in the Portuguese town of Fatima in 1917. The Blessed Mother requested and foretold an increase in the devotion. Fresh emphasis was placed on reparation to the Immaculate Heart by a vision to Sister Lucia in 1925 when the First Saturday Devotion was explained by Our Lady.

In the midst of the Second World War Pope Pius XII made an Act of Consecration of the Church and the whole world to the Immaculate Heart on 31st October 1942 which was then solemnly proclaimed on 8th December 1942. Two years later by a decree of 4th May 1944 the Holy Father extended the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary to the Universal Church. Before the Reform of the General Roman Calendar the feast was on 22nd August. According to the revised calendar it is now marked on the Saturday following the second Sunday after Pentecost.

Consecration to the Immaculate Heart

We adore the Sacred Heart of Jesus and His Divine Heart expresses His love for mankind. By contrast we venerate the physical heart of Mary as the expression of her love for Jesus. Mary’s love for the Saviour is the model for the way we should love God. We recognise in the sinless Immaculate Virgin Mary the holiness and love of one who was called to co-operate in Jesus’ redemptive sufferings.

Living a consecration requires union with Jesus and Mary; offering to them all that we have both temporal and spiritual; and co-operating fully with their will without seeking reward for ourselves. An Act of Consecration is the fullest kind of response to our baptismal promises. Mary is the exemplar in this respect.

Consecration is a total gift of self to God. Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary is one ultimately addressed to God through Mary who is the model of service to Jesus.

Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

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Reparation to the Immaculate Heart

The theme of reparation for sin has been prominent in Marian apparitions. Consecration to the Immaculate Heart also implies reparation for the offences we have committed against Mary including the many blasphemies uttered against her Son. God willed that Mary be associated with His Son’s sacrifice for the sake of our sins on Calvary. It is therefore fitting that her Immaculate Heart in union with His Divine Heart should together receive reparation for the grief and suffering caused by our sins and those of the members of the mystical Body of Christ.

First Saturday Devotion to Our Lady

This devotion of reparation to the Immaculate Heart was revealed by Our Lady to Sister Lucia when she appeared to her in 1925 with the Infant Jesus. The Virgin Mother explained the purpose and nature of the devotion in these words:

“Look, my daughter, at my heart, surrounded by thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment by their blasphemies and ingratitude. You at least try to console me and say that I promise to assist at the hour of death, with the graces necessary for salvation, all those who, on the first Saturday of five consecutive months, shall confess, receive Holy Communion, recite five decades of the Rosary, and keep me company for fifteen minutes while meditating on fifteen mysteries of the Rosary, with the intention of making reparation to me.”

Five Saturdays were requested to atone for the five ways in which people offend the Immaculate Heart of Mary. These are:

• Attacks upon Mary's Immaculate Conception

• Attacks against her Perpetual Virginity

• Attacks upon her Divine Maternity and the refusal to accept her as the Mother of all mankind.

• For those who try to publicly implant in children's hearts indifference, contempt and even hatred of the Immaculate Mother.

• For those who insult her directly in her sacred images.

Act of Reparation to the Immaculate Heart

Other prayers that may appropriately be recited during this month of August:

Novena to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Litany of the Immaculate Heart of Mary