

Preparatory Catechesis for the Consecration of the Youth of the World to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ.

**The purpose of this catechesis is to prepare the youth of the world for the consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus by Pope Benedict XVI during World Youth Day (WYD) Madrid 2011.**

**It is divided in three parts: In the first one we will consider the message of the Pope for World Youth Day in the light of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In the second one, we will present the main points of this devotion. And in the third one, we will explain the meaning of the consecration of the youth of the world to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.**

### **I.- “From the heart of man to the Heart of God”**

1.- When we enter into the depths of our heart, we always find a deep desire: **we long for happiness**. But we wonder where and how we can find this happiness. Our experience tells us that this thirst is quenched when **our longing for infinity is satisfied**. Pope Benedict tells us in his message: **“Men and women were created for something great, for infinity”**. (Benedict XVI, Message of his Holiness for the twenty-sixth World Youth Day, Madrid, 2011) **This longing for infinity is man’s desire of being loved by an endless love**. Christian revelation tells us that: “God is love”. God has revealed himself as an infinite, eternal, personal and **merciful love that fills** completely the universal longing for happiness. This is why the Pope says: “God is the source of life. **To set God aside is to separate ourselves from that source and, inevitably, to deprive ourselves of fulfilment and joy**: “without the Creator, the creature fades into nothingness” (Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, 36; WYD Message). Sadly, we see this in the numerous attempts our society has done to build an earthly paradise, leaving God aside.

2.- **This search of man’s heart ends when one discovers God’s Heart**. On this topic, St. Augustine says: **“You made us for yourself, Oh God, and our heart is restless until it rests in you”**. The concern to which St. Augustine refers is the difficulty we all have in attaining **true Love** as a consequence of our condition of creatures; we are finite; moreover, we are sinners. Over and over again we run into the difficulty of our **selfishness, the chaos of our passions**, that throws away this true Love. Man’s heart “needs” a heart at his same level, a heart that can enter into his history, and, on the other hand, an “all-powerful” heart that can take him out of his limitations and sins. We can say that In Jesus Christ, God has met mankind and has loved us with a “human heart”. In the encounter of man’s heart with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the mystery of salvation becomes real. “In fact, from the infinite horizon of his love, God wished to enter into the limits of human history and the human condition. He took on a body and a heart. Thus, we can contemplate and encounter the infinite in the finite, the invisible and ineffable Mystery in the human Heart of Jesus, the Nazarene” (Benedict XVI, Angelus, 1/VI/2008)

3.- **The most perfect revelation of this Love is the Cross**. In the Cross God’s love for us has reached its **limit** with the donation of His life. The biggest expression of how much and in which way God loves us, is the open heart of Jesus on the Cross, as a consequence of the wound on His side with a spear. As the Pope states in his message: “it is from Jesus’ heart, pierced on the Cross, that this divine life streamed forth” (WYD message). Thus, **in the Cross, Jesus changes our “heart of stone” wounded by sin, into a “heart of flesh”**, like his: he gives us his Love and, at the same time, he enables us to love with his same love.

4.- The fountain where man must drink in order to satisfy his infinite demand for love and being loved, flows from Jesus’ Heart, alive and risen from the dead. **Therefore young people will live “planted and built up in Jesus Christ, firm in the faith” (Col 2:7) in the personal encounter with the heart of Jesus. Holiness is an immersion in the flow of love that springs up from the Sacred Heart of Jesus.** “Cardinal Newman’s motto, Cor ad cor loquitur, or “Heart speaks unto heart”, gives us an insight into his understanding of the Christian life as a call to holiness, experienced as the profound desire of the human heart to enter into intimate communion with the Heart of God.” (Benedict XVI, Homily in the Beatification of Venerable Cardinal Newman). ----

### **II. “Behold the Heart which has loved men so much!”**

Over the centuries, the Catholic Church has grown in understanding the worship of the of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Many people have discovered in the **contemplation of the open heart** a valid way to identify themselves completely with Christ and to live the call to holiness.

Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690), religious of the Visitation Order in Paray-le-Monial (France) was chosen by Jesus to reveal himself to her **in the Eucharist**, opening to her the mystery of his Heart: **“This is the Heart which has loved men so much and yet men do not want to love Me in return, and for recognition I mainly receive only ingratitude.”** Throughout her entire life, Saint Margaret Mary was an instrument elected to propagate the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, accompanying him in the Eucharist by means of the **Eucharistic Adoration and the practice of the Holy Hour**. She also spread the consecration to the divine Heart and the offering of **small acts of love in expiation for our sins**. In addition, she spread also the practice of the **First Fridays: confession and communion in reparation for sins**. She was beatified in 1864 by Blessed Pius IX and canonized in 1920 by

Benedict XV. Her feast is celebrated on the 16th of October. Together with this saint we also remember St. Claude La Colombiere, S.I. He was her spiritual director and collaborated with her in the diffusion of the message of love to the Sacred Heart of Jesus reaching even to very distant places. Due to his influence, the Jesuit Order, undertook the commitment of propagating the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The effect of these revelations in the life of the Church was **so extraordinary** that in 1856 Blessed Pius IX established the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and in 1899 Pope Leo XIII consecrated mankind to the Sacred Heart. Hundreds of religious congregations **-devoted to the education of the youth**, the assistance to the sick and the elder, and the “ad gentes” missions- were born at that time inspired by the spirituality of the Sacred Heart. Throughout the 20th century, the Popes have repeatedly invited the Church to turn to **the Sacred Heart as “the chief sign and symbol of that threefold love with which the divine Redeemer unceasingly loves His eternal Father and all mankind”** (Pius XII, Enc. “Haurietis Aquas”). The contemplation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus opens nowadays new paths to holiness in the Church. It can be presented to men and women of our time in need of **divine mercy as a message of hope** so that “In this way, [...] on the ruins accumulated through hatred and violence, the civilization of love so greatly desired can be built, the kingdom of the Heart of Christ” (John Paul II, message to the Superior General of the Jesuits, P. Peter Hans Kolvenbach, 5/X/1986).

**III. We can consecrate ourselves to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in order to stay “planted and built up in Jesus Christ, firm in faith” (Col. 2:7).**

**The consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ that will take place during WYD is an act in which we, the youth of the world, led by our Pope, want to fix our eyes on Jesus Christ, so that he helps us to live “planted and built up in Jesus Christ, firm in faith” (Col 2:7).** It deals with reviving in us the experience of the beloved disciple, who, contemplating the open Heart of Jesus on the Cross, experienced his Love and became his witness. “And he that saw it has given testimony: and his testimony is true.” (John 19:35).

Consecration is an **act of faith**. When Pope Benedict will consecrate us to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, **he will invite us to confess our faith: “We firmly believe that Jesus Christ offered himself on the Cross in order to give us his love. In his passion, he bore our sufferings, took upon himself our sins, obtained forgiveness for us and reconciled us with God the Father, opening for us the way to eternal life.” (WYD Message). This confession of faith will be done from the knowledge of the truth we proclaim, and as a result of our personal relationship with Christ. This relationship is based in the trust in the love of his Heart. In this confession of faith, the Bishops will join the Pope. This means “that our personal faith in Christ is bound to the faith of the Church.” (Message WYD). It is in the “heart of the Church” where we can feel the beat of the Heart of Jesus.**

It is also an **act of hope**. The Pope will consecrate every young person in the world, **not only the ones present at the vigil**. In today's youth we find the **hope of the Church** and of humanity. **In this consecration, the youth will state, together with the Pope, that “apart from Jesus Christ risen from the dead, there can be no salvation!** He alone can free the world from evil and bring about the growth of the Kingdom of justice, peace and love to which we all aspire.” (WYD Message). United in “only one Heart”, we will ask together, with the whole Church, “Come Lord Jesus”, help the youth of the third millennium to be the builders of the civilization of love which is built “wherever individuals and nations accept God’s presence, worship him in truth and listen to his voice” (WYD message).

Finally, consecration is an **act of charity**. The youth of the third millennium, **like the apostle Thomas**, wish to “have tangible contact with Jesus and to put our hand, so to speak, upon the signs of his Passion, the signs of his love” (WYD message). **In this consecration we will touch Jesus, and we will renew the grace of our baptism** in which we were immersed in this Love. The desire we have of **constantly drinking from the source from which eternal life flows, i.e. the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Penance** will be strengthened in us. **We will look with his same merciful eyes, so that we are always close to the poorest and the sick**, becoming a tangible sign of God’s love. In imitation of the beloved disciple we will be also invited “**to create a place for the Virgin Mary in our home.**” The consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus will be done bearing in mind that the Virgin Mary, is our special intercessor and mediator. She is the one “**who received God’s word with faith**” and She will teach us to believe in God’s love, and will show us to trust in Him and to be his witnesses among our brothers and sisters.

#### **Act of Consecration to the Sacred heart of Jesus**

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I consecrate myself to Your Most Sacred Heart. Take possession of my whole being; transform me into Yourself. Make my hands Your hands, my feet Your feet, my heart Your heart. Let me see with Your eyes, listen with Your ears, speak with Your lips, love with Your heart, understand with Your mind, serve with Your will, and be dedicated with my whole being. Make me Your other self. Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, send me Your Holy Spirit to teach me to love You and to live through You, with You, in You and for You.

