



This painting hangs in the Visitation Chapel in Paray-le-Monial, where Christ appeared to St. Margaret Mary

## Called to be an Apostle of Christ's Love

Margaret Mary was born on 22 July, 1647 at Lhautecour in Burgundy in east central France. She was the fifth of seven children in the Alacoque family. From her earliest years Margaret was warmly devoted to the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin Mary. At eight, she was sent to the school of the Urbanist Nuns at Charolles, but she was withdrawn two years later because of poor health.

She entered the Visitation convent in Paray-le-Monial in August 1671 and made her profession in November 1672. Margaret endured great physical and personal suffering until her death on 17 October 1690. She was canonized by Pope Benedict XV on 13 May 1920, and her feast day was set on 16 October. St. Margaret Mary's incorrupt body rests under the side altar in the Chapel of the Apparitions at the Visitation Monastery in Paray-le-Monial.

Christ our Lord revealed himself to Margaret Mary on numerous occasions. The greatest of his revelations occurred between 27 December 1673 and June 1675. Margaret Mary, intensely reluctant to tell about her experiences with Our Lord, acted under obedience to her superior, Mother de Sau-maise, in writing about them in letters to Fr. Jean Croiset toward the end of her life.

In these private revelations, Christ asked that Catholics would receive Holy Communion on the first Friday of the month and would engage in adoration of the Eucharist in a Holy Hour on the preceding day. He also requested the inauguration of a Feast of the Sacred Heart. In his 1928 encyclical *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, Pope Pius XI referred to the credibility of her visions by saying that Christ "manifested himself" to St. Margaret Mary and "promised her that all those who rendered this honour to his Heart would be endowed with an abundance of heavenly graces."

Both before and after his priestly ordination, Fr. Croiset was intensely devoted to Christ's Sacred Heart. His book on this devotion is a classic and is popular even today. We learn very much, too, from the journals of Father Claude de la Colombière, who was her confessor and spiritual guide at Paray. (See issue #17.) (over)

St. Margaret Mary's letters and an account of her life are published in *Jesus Reveals His Heart: Letters of Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque* by Fr. Clarence A. Herbst, S.J. (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1980). The present article also draws from the article on St. Margaret Mary in *Wikipedia*.



## Our Lord Opened His Heart to St. Margaret Mary\*

From before her entrance into the Visitation Convent in Paray-le-Monial in 1671, Margaret Mary had been favoured with mystical graces. Her superior, Mother Thouvant, discouraged her from indulging in these experiences and, at the end of her novitiate, her admission to the Order was delayed for several months. She was told that her long prayers were a sign of pride and self-love. But Christ made it clear that she was called to offer herself to him “as a sacrifice of immolation.” Reparation to the Heart of Christ would be her special vocation. During her retreat for profession in 1672, Christ bade her to “Behold the wound in my side, and make your dwelling there now and forever.”

Then on 27 December 1673, she wrote in obedience to her superior that Christ “made me rest for a very long time on his divine breast, where he revealed to me the unutterable secrets of his Sacred Heart, which he had kept hidden up to then, . . . in a way so effective and perceptible [that there was] no room for doubt.”

Christ said: “My divine heart is so impassioned with love for men, and for you in particular, that not being able to contain the flames of its burning charity, it must spread them by means of you and make itself manifest to men so to enrich them out of its precious treasures. . . . I have chosen you as an abyss of unworthiness and of ignorance for the accomplishment of this great design, to the end that all shall be done by me.”

Jesus then took her heart, which he “placed in his adorable breast . . . a tiny atom which was consumed in this flaming furnace, from which he drew it forth like a brilliant flame, and gave it back to me with the words: ‘To prove to you that this grace is not a bit of imagination, this pain will remain with you always, even though I have closed the wound in your side.’”

From then on, Jesus revealed his heart more clearly on the First Friday of every month. In early 1674, it appeared “more radiant than the sun . . . surrounded by a crown of thorns which symbolized the wounds which our sins inflicted on it, and surmounted by a cross to signify that the cross was planted there from the first instant of his incarnation.”



The Savior, she said, wanted to make himself known and to be honored “under the symbol of this heart of flesh” because of “the ardent desire he has to be loved by men.” . . . He promised that “wherever this image is exposed, there he will pour out his graces and blessings.” This devotion is “like a last effort of his love, which wishes . . . to be propitious to men in order to draw them away from the rule of Satan.”

During the year 1674, Christ complained of receiving only coldness and rebuffs from people in response to his eagerness to do them good, and he asked reparation from Margaret. She should receive holy communion as often as her superior allowed, but especially on the First Friday of every month. In the Thursday evening before, he asked her to share the sadness he felt in the Garden of Olives. . . to ask mercy for sinners, and to make up for the desertion of his apostles. When Margaret made this known to her superior, these ideas were treated with contempt. Margaret became violently ill, and the Superior relented only when Margaret recovered after an apparition of Our Lady.

From then on, her superior told Margaret she should confide her experiences to learned religious counselors. After some disappointing consultations, Our Lord assured her: “I will send you my faithful servant and perfect friend who will teach you to know me and abandon yourself to me.” It was about this time that the young Jesuit, Father Claude de la Colombiere was sent to Paray-le-Monial as superior of the Jesuit community and was appointed confessor of the nuns at the Visitation Convent. (cont’d next issue)

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\*This account is based on *Perfect Friend: The Life of Blessed Claude La Colombiere, 1641-1682* by Georges Guitton, SJ (transl. by William J. Young, SJ, St. Louis: B. Herder, 1956), chapter 13.

## St. Margaret Mary Writes to Fr. Jean Croiset about Christ's Desires

During the years 1689-1690, Fr. Jean Croiset, a young Jesuit deeply devoted to the Sacred Heart, found inspiration in the Saint's letters recounting her revelations.

St. Margaret Mary calls Fr. Croiset her very dear brother in the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ and writes "...this devotion to His divine Heart will save from hell a great number of souls and put them on the way to salvation. That is why he has such an ardent desire to be known, loved and honored by men. He wants by this devotion to establish in their hearts the reign of his pure love. This he promises as the great reward to all those who work for the establishment of its reign."

She said: [Christ has deigned] "to use us [Fr. Croiset and herself] to help make him known, loved and honored. He has promised infinite blessings to those who, under His inspiration, work with all their might for this end."

[Christ promised that] "...all those who consecrate themselves to Him and are devoted to him in order to give him this pleasure, who do all in their power to give him and cause others to give him all the love, honor and glory they can by the means He provides, will never be lost. He will be their secure refuge against all the snares of their enemies.

"Especially at the hour of death this divine Heart will receive them lovingly and make their salvation sure. He will take care to sanctify them and make them great before his heavenly Father in proportion as they work earnestly to extend the reign of his love in the hearts of men. Since he is the source of all blessings, He will shower them on every place where an image of His Sacred Heart shall be honoured, because his love urges him to dispense the inexhaustible treasures of his sanctifying and salutary graces to all souls of good will."

Christ made known to her "... His great longing to be known, loved, and honored by men in reparation for the great bitterness and many humiliations they have made him suffer. He wishes to apply to them the merits of his suffering in this way."

"Would that it were possible for me to reveal the infinite riches hidden away in this precious

treasure! He bestows them on his faithful friends...."

"It is reserved to the Reverend Fathers of the Society of Jesus to make known the value and advantages of this precious treasure, of which the more one takes the more there is to take. . . . It is by this efficacious means which he is giving to them that they will be able to carry out perfectly according to his desire the sacred ministry of charity committed to them. . . . [Their words] will penetrate like a two-edged sword the most hardened hearts and make them susceptible to the love of this divine Heart. The most sin-laden souls will be brought by this means to salutary repentance. . . . He expects much of your holy Society in this regard and has grand designs upon it."

[In carrying out Christ's plan for this devotion] "everything must be done gently and tactfully, with the means he furnishes you. Leave to him the success of everything, without desiring or wishing more. He will give you to understand in each instance what He wants you to do. This, it seems to me, is your means of sanctification. For in proportion as you work at this, this Divine Heart will sanctify you with his very own holiness."

"To convert the most hardened sinners and penetrate the coldest hearts, he will make the word of his preachers and of his faithful friends like a flaming sword. It will melt by his love the coldest hearts. This applies especially to the holy Society of Jesus, to which he offers his graces in order to give its members some favourable means for worthily and perfectly fulfilling the duties of their ministry of charity, for the glory of God, in the conversion of souls. The members of the Society ought frequently to exhort souls to avail themselves of the great treasures contained in this devotion to the Sacred Heart."

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These quotations are drawn from *Jesus Reveals His Heart: Letters of Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque* by Fr. Clarence A. Herbst, S.J. (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1980), pp. 189-246.



**Act of Reparation (modified)**  
of Pope Pius XI (1928)  
For the Feast of the Sacred Heart

Good Jesus, we have been ungrateful for your overflowing love, which we have repaid by forgetfulness, neglect and contempt. We are here, in humility before your altar, to make amends for the coldness of your own people, and to offer you special honor for the insults and rejection your most loving Heart has received from many persons.

At the same time, we remember that we too are often unworthy of your love, and so we are moved with sorrow to make the following prayer.

First of all, we beg you to show us your mercy. We are prepared to voluntarily atone for the sins we have committed, and also for the sins of those who are far from the way of salvation.

This could be because they obstinately refuse to follow you as their shepherd and leader, or because, rejecting the promises of their Baptism, they have refused to follow the sweet yoke of your law.

We now want to make up for all these offenses. And we wish to single out some of them and make amends for them in particular, namely, for the lack of modesty in life and dress, for impurities, for the many snares set for the minds of the innocent.

Also, for the violation of your holy feasts, for the harsh blasphemies against you and your saints, for the insults offered to your Vicar the Pope and to priests, for the neglect of the holy Eucharist, or by profaning it by sacrilege. And, finally, we want to make up for the public sins of nations which reject the rights and the teaching authority of your holy Church. Would that we could wash away these crimes by our own sacrifice!

And now, to make amends for the outrage offered to your divine honor, we offer you the same satisfaction which you, Jesus, once offered to Your Father on the Cross and which You continually renew on our altars. We offer this joined to the expiations of the Virgin Mother and of all the Saints, and of all good Christians.

We promise sincerely that, as far as possible, with the help of Your grace, we will make amends for our own past sins, and for the sins of others, and for the neglect of Your boundless love—by firm faith, by a pure way of life, and by a close observance of the Gospel, especially by way of charity.

We will also strive hard to prevent injuries to your honor, and gather as many as we can to become your followers. We beg you, most loving Jesus, to receive this voluntary homage of our expiation through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who offers you worthy reparation.

Grant, by the great gift of final perseverance, to keep us faithful until death in our duty and in Your service, so that at length we may all come to our final home, where you with the Father and the Holy Spirit live and reign one God for ever and ever. Amen.