

## Christ Sent St. Claude Colombière, his “Faithful Servant and Perfect Friend”

St. Claude La Colombière (1641-82), born at Saint-Symphorien-d’Ozon in southeastern France, studied at the Jesuit school in Lyons from the age of 9. He entered the novitiate in Avignon in 1658 and taught for five years (1661-66) in the Jesuit academy in that town. In 1666, Claude gave a stirring panygeric on St. Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, who was canonized that year. Strongly dedicated to the Heart of Christ, Saint Francis de Sales had founded the Religious of the Visitation with St. Jeanne de Chantal and had written to her: “Truly, our little congregation is the work of the hearts of Jesus and Mary. Our Savior in dying gave us birth through the opening of his Sacred Heart.” Claude was sent to Paris for theology in the renowned College of Clermont, not far from the College of Saint-Barbe, where Saints Ignatius, Francis Xavier and Peter Faber had studied.

Claude found the University of Paris awash in resistance to the heresy of Jansenism, with Jesuit theologians in the vanguard of the opposition. Countering the narrow rigidity of the Jansenists, Jesuits stressed the openhearted mercy and love of God for the sinner. This spirit helped form the mind of Colombière as he prepared for priestly ordination, which took place on 6 April 1669. At the end of the following summer, Claude was sent to Lyons to occupy the chair of rhetoric in the Jesuits’ College of the Trinity. There he also directed students in the sodalities of Our Lady, which were schools of spiritual growth begun in the Roman College by the Jesuit John Leunis one hundred years earlier. After two years he was appointed preacher in the college church, where he attracted attention by his challenging spirituality.

In 1674, it was time for Claude to set everything else aside and engage in a year of spiritual reflection and growth, when the Jesuit makes the 30-day retreat again and prepares for a lifetime of mature service in the Lord’s vineyard. Claude knew that he was blessed with remarkable gifts and that he had used these effectively. However, he chided himself for vainglory—



pride in his reputation—and he was concerned that he was less than a perfect Jesuit. Under the guidance of his spiritual director, he strove to humble himself in face of the Lord’s many benefits and he decided to vow himself, under pain of serious sin, to observe all the rules of the Society of Jesus. After the year of Tertianship, he made his final profession as a Jesuit and was ready to be sent to the challenge of a lifetime.

Colombière’s friends might have expected that he would become a renowned preacher in Avignon, Lyons or even in Paris, but his superior chose instead to send him to Paray-le-Monial, a backwater town with about sixteen hundred residents, including a convent of Visitation nuns. Paray had been buzzing with the story of one young sister who was a problem because of her unusual prayer life and her alleged encounters with Christ. She was a puzzle to her superior and her fellow nuns, as well as to the spiritual guides invited to counsel her. Claude heard about her as soon as he arrived to take up life at the small college in Paray.

(over)

# Christ chose Margaret Mary and Claude to herald devotion to his Sacred Heart

Claude soon paid a visit to the Visitation convent and was introduced to the sisters by the superior Mother de Saumaise. Christ told Sister Margaret Mary that this was the priest that he had promised to send as his “faithful servant and perfect friend.” A short while later, Claude served as extraordinary confessor to the nuns during the spring ember days, and soon after that Margaret confidently opened her heart to this young priest and told him about Christ’s mysterious revelations. Claude saw immediately that, far from being deceived, Margaret was experiencing divine favors of an extraordinary kind.

Margaret Mary continued to undergo criticism from other sisters for her prolonged prayers and special devotions. Father Claude encouraged her with the assurance that Christ had chosen her to experience pain and humiliation in reparation for the coldness and indifference that many people, even religious, showed him in the Eucharist. This was in fact to be her special calling, Christ said, to be “a victim of immolation.”

One morning, as Margaret was coming up to receive Holy Communion, Christ showed her his Sacred Heart like a burning furnace and said that his Heart and those of Claude and Margaret would be united forever. Christ made it clear that Margaret should tell Claude of the treasures of his Sacred Heart “so that he would come to know it and make its worth and value known to all.” Margaret did so and was grateful for Claude’s warm acceptance of this information. By now Margaret was convinced she could speak openly to Claude about all that Christ had revealed to her.

During the week after the feast of Corpus Christi in 1675, Margaret received an extraordinary revelation. Christ showed her his Heart, saying: “Behold the Heart which has loved men so much that it has spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming itself, to prove its love to them. And as thanks I receive from the greater number only ingratitude because of the disregard, the irreverence, the sacrilege and the coldness which they have for me in this sacrament of

love. But what is still more offensive,” he continued, “is that these are hearts that are consecrated to me.” Christ then asked that the Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi be dedicated to honor his Heart through reparation. He promised an abundance of graces to those who would do this. It is commonly thought that Margaret Mary, and perhaps Claude himself, made a solemn act of reparation on 21 June, 1675.

One shouldn’t think that St. Claude’s dedication to the Sacred Heart blossomed out of nowhere or that it was unique among his fellow Jesuits. 17<sup>th</sup> century France saw a flowering of books penned by Jesuits relating to the Heart of Christ—by Fr. Louis Lallemant, Fr. Jean-Baptiste Saint-Jure, Fr. Jacques Nouet and others. This is not surprising. As Fr. Bainvel wrote: “It was enough for them to move in the direction of St. Ignatius to find the Sacred Heart.”

In September 1676, St. Claude was sent to England to serve as chaplain to the Duchess of York, who had remained faithful to the Catholic religion. His daily homily and his ministry to religious women gave him a good opportunity to preach about the Eucharist and the love of the Sacred Heart. Claude lived in an ill-heated suite and by the time he was there a year he had developed a severe lung disease and was coughing up blood. Following upon the Titus Oates furore, police broke into Colombière’s apartment and arrested him, since he was a well-known Jesuit. He was taken to prison, where he was under close guard for three weeks.

As a result, his lung condition grew worse and he was hemorrhaging severely. He was then sent back to France, where he counseled young Jesuits for two years and died on 15 February 1682. Within slightly more than a year after his death, four volumes of Claude’s sermons were published, along with the notes from his tertianship retreat and his London retreat. In the latter he gave an account of the great apparition of June 1675, which alerted the world to Christ’s revelations to Margaret Mary. Claude La Colombière was canonized in 1992.

### Prayers of St. Claude Colombière

Claude had been strikingly successful as a teacher and preacher in Lyons both before and after his year of Tertianship. A young man closely familiar with God in prayer, intelligent and alert to the spiritual decay of the times, attuned to the minds and hearts of his congregation and students, alert to the subtle nuances of his native language, he was lionized by those who heard his sermons or met with him in the salons of the well-to-do.

Not surprisingly, he was smitten with guilt over feelings of vainglory that burdened his spirit. He worked with fierce determination to bring these feelings under control during his third year of spiritual formation. Dissatisfied with his efforts and sometimes brought to near despair over his imperfection, he begged God for an ardent hope and he finally found stability that lasted a lifetime through this well-known prayer of his.

#### Act of Confidence

My God, I am so convinced that you keep watch over those who hope in you, and that we can wait for nothing when we look for all from you, that I am resolved in the future to live free from every care, and to turn all my anxieties over to you. "In peace in the selfsame, I will sleep and I will rest, for you, O Lord, have singularly settled me in hope." (Psalm 4:9-10).

Men may deprive me of possessions and of honor; sickness may strip me of strength and the means of serving you; I may even lose your grace by sin; but I shall never lose my hope. I shall keep it till the last moment of my life; and at that moment all the demons in Hell shall strive to tear it from me in vain. "In peace in the selfsame I will sleep and I will rest."

Others may look for happiness from their wealth or their talents; others may rest on the innocence of their life, or the severity of their penance, or the amount of their alms, or the fervor of their prayers. "You, O Lord, have singularly settled me in hope."

As for me, Lord, all my confidence is my confidence itself. This confidence has never deceived anyone. No one, no one has hoped in the Lord and has been confounded.

I am sure, therefore, that I shall be eternally happy, since I firmly hope to be, and because it is from you, O God, that I hope for it. "In you, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be confounded." (Psalm 30:1) I know, alas! I know only too well, that I am weak and unstable. I know what temptation can do against the strongest virtue. I have seen the stars of heaven fall, and the pillars of the firmament; but that cannot frighten me. So long as I continue to hope, I shall be sheltered from all misfortune; and I am sure of hoping always, since I hope also for this unwavering hopefulness.

Finally, I am sure that I cannot hope too much in you, and that I cannot receive less than I have hoped for from you. So I hope that you will hold me safe on the steepest slopes, that you will sustain me against the most furious assaults, and that you will make my weakness triumph over my most fearful enemies. I hope that you will love me always, and that I too shall love you without ceasing. To carry my hope once for all as far as it can go, I hope from you to possess you, O my Creator, in time and in eternity. Amen.

#### Prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

O God, what will you do to conquer the fearful hardness of our hearts? Lord, you must give us new hearts, tender hearts, sensitive hearts, to replace hearts that are made of marble and of bronze.

You must give us your own Heart, Jesus. Come, lovable Heart of Jesus. Place your Heart deep in the centre of our hearts and enkindle in each heart a flame of love as strong, as great, as the sum of all the reasons that I have for loving you, my God.

O Holy Heart of Jesus, dwell hidden in my heart, so that I may live only in you and only for you, so that, in the end, I may live with you eternally in heaven.  
Amen. (over)

---

This newsletter is produced at Loyola High School, P.O. Box 1140, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania by Fr. Ted Walters, S.J. It is intended to remind us of the treasure Christ has committed to us in devotion to the Sacred Heart. Editorial contributions to this newsletter are warmly welcomed. Please send us the names and email addresses of additional persons who would like to receive issues of the newsletter. (To send such names or for items to contribute, you may email: [twalters2002@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:twalters2002@yahoo.co.uk) Thank you.

# *Consecration of the Human Race to the Sacred Heart*

(Appropriate to the Feast of Christ the King)

Most sweet Jesus, Redeemer of the human race,  
look down upon us, humbly prostrate before Your altar.  
We are yours and yours we wish to be;  
but to be more surely united with you, behold each one of us  
freely consecrates himself today to your most Sacred Heart.

Many, indeed, have never known you;  
many too, despising your precepts, have rejected you.  
Have mercy on them all, most merciful Jesus,  
and draw them to your Sacred Heart.

May you be King, O Lord,  
not only of the faithful who have never forsaken you,  
but also of the prodigal children who have abandoned you;  
grant that they may quickly return to your Father's house,  
lest they die of wretchedness and hunger.

Be King of those who are deceived by erroneous opinions,  
or whom discord keeps aloof,  
and call them back to the harbour of truth and unity of faith,  
so that soon there may be but one flock and one shepherd.

Be King also of all those who sit  
in the ancient superstition of the Gentiles,  
and refuse not to deliver them out of darkness  
into the light and kingdom of God.

Grant, O Lord, to Your Church,  
assurance of freedom and immunity from harm;  
give peace and order to all nations,  
and make the Earth resound from pole to pole with one cry:

Praise to the divine Heart that wrought our salvation;  
to it be glory and honour forever. Amen.

(Pope Leo XIII, *Annum Sacrum*, 1899)

**Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus**  
**A precious heritage**  
**of the Society of Jesus**

**Opening Prayer**

God our Father, you have drawn men and women from throughout the world to honor your love for people everywhere under the symbol of your Son's Sacred Heart. You have especially involved Jesuits in promoting this devotion since the time of your "faithful servant and perfect friend," St. Claude la Colombière. Grant that we may value the precious gift you have given us in this devotion, so that we and many others may draw life-giving waters from this spring of salvation. (cf. Is. 12:3) We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

1

We have all meditated on the words:

"God so loved the world  
that he gave his only Son  
so that everyone who believes in him ...  
might have eternal life." (John 3:16)

2

We know that love was the driving force that  
led God to

create this vast and beautiful world,  
bring into being people like you and me,  
send Christ to save us from our sins, and to open  
heaven to welcome us into glory.

3

By the mid-1600's people had forgotten about the  
kindness and love of God our Father and they  
saw him more

as a demanding taskmaster  
who filled them with fear and anguish.

4

The world had grown cold and empty of love and  
good people lived  
under a heavy burden of guilt.

People had forgotten about God as a loving  
Father.

5

This was the situation  
when Christ appeared to St. Margaret Mary in  
1673.

He told her of his overwhelming  
love for mankind  
and his desire for people to love him in return.

6

He showed Margaret his Heart aflame with love,  
surrounded by thorns of coldness and  
indifference  
and pierced with people's rejection.  
He asked for a reparation of love.

7

The other Visitation sisters didn't understand,  
so Christ said he would send her a new confessor,  
a young Jesuit who had recently moved to  
Paray-la-Monial.

Fr. Claude Colombière recognized her visions as  
genuine and encouraged her to welcome what  
Christ told her.

8

Christ called Claude "my faithful servant and  
perfect friend."

He said he wanted people to respond to his love and  
to make up for so much coldness and  
indifference.

He and Margaret consecrated themselves to the  
Heart of Christ  
and communicated Christ's desires widely to  
others.

9

St. Margaret said:

"It is reserved to the Society of Jesus to make  
known

the value and utility of this precious treasure, of  
which the more one takes, the more there is left to  
take."

Many Jesuits supported this devotion with their  
writings and preaching, most notably,  
Fathers Croiset and Gallifey.

10

Theologians debated about the devotion for many  
years:

Were these valid revelations?

Could worship be paid to a material Heart? What a  
novelty! Why not worship other parts as well?  
Are emotions really centred in the heart? etc.

(over)

## 11

Catholics responded warmly to honoring Christ's Heart.  
By 1765 there were more than 1100 confraternities in honour of the Sacred Heart.  
That year the Polish bishops were first allowed to celebrate the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

## 12

The official decree of 1765 acknowledged that  
"Devotion to the Heart of Jesus  
has been propagated in almost every part of  
the Catholic world  
and fostered everywhere by the bishops."

## 13

The feast of the Sacred Heart was extended to  
the universal Church in 1856.  
Jesuits officially accepted the mission  
of promulgating this devotion in 1883.

## 14

Prominent Jesuits had long supported this devotion and powerful voices had spoken out for it. St. Peter Canisius in 1549 begged support from the Sacred Heart before going to Germany.  
We have referred to St. Claude Colombière, Fathers Croiset and Gallifet.  
French, Spanish, and German Jesuits had declared strongly for the devotion.

## 15

Devotion to Christ's Sacred Heart  
appealed especially to Jesuits because in the Spiritual Exercises, we find a mirror of this devotion when we seek  
"an intimate knowledge of Our Lord  
so we may love him more deeply  
and follow him more closely."  
We respond totally in the Contemplation to Attain Love.

## 16

In the 23<sup>rd</sup> General Congregation in 1883 the fathers gratefully accepted  
the most pleasant task (*munus suavissimum*)  
of propagating devotion to the Sacred Heart.

## 17

Later Congregations renewed this grateful response—in 1915, 1966, 1975, and 1983. The 31<sup>st</sup> General Congregation in 1966 urged all Jesuits  
to spread more widely a love for the Sacred Heart and make the love of Christ the centre of their own spiritual lives.

## 18

Fathers General have strongly supported this devotion—from Fr. Roothaan in 1829 to Fr. Kolvenbach in 2008.  
The Generals praised the Apostleship of Prayer repeatedly.

## 19

Fr. Pedro Arrupe spoke out warmly about this devotion on many occasions. He said: "We ought to thank God for the gift he made of this devotion to the Society. It is our treasure."

## 20

Two years before he died, Fr. Arrupe said: "From my noviceship on, I have always been convinced that this devotion sums up  
a symbolic expression  
of the very core of the Ignatian spirit and has an extraordinary power, both for personal perfection and for apostolic fruitfulness...."

## 21

"If you want my advice," he said, "I would say to you, after 54 years of living in the Society of Jesus, that there is a tremendous power latent in this devotion to the Heart of Christ."  
(6 February 1981)

## Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, when we consider the love you have shown the Society of Jesus in asking us to promote devotion to your Sacred Heart, we are astonished and humbled by your kindness. We ask that we may respond generously to your love, may share abundantly in the graces of the Heart of Christ, and may enable others to draw strength and holiness from this devotion. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.