

RECEIVE THE KING: EXPERIENCE GOD'S LOVE WITH DOCILITY



Therefore, receive Jesus into your homes as a King, and a Friend. He is a King, as He Himself said with sublime majesty to the cowardly Pilate, and He desires that every family and every nation should recognize and proclaim His Kingship over human society. . . . He asks it of you as an act of reparation, and a consolation to His Heart. See Him stand at the doors of countless houses, rich and poor, crowned with thorns, His hair is wet with the dew of the night, begging and imploring to be admitted, asking for a shelter from the tempest that has broken out against Him in the world. . . . He is knocking with His wounded hand and saying to you: *I am Jesus, be not afraid, I am the King of Love, Open to Me!*

—Fr. Mateo Crawley-Boevey, SSCC¹

WELCOME JESUS INTO YOUR HOME

Have you ever seen the famous William Holman Hunt painting *The Light of the World*, in which Jesus stands in front of a closed wooden door with no handle, knocking and waiting to be allowed entrance? The painting illustrates the scripture “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, [then] I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me” (Rv 3:20). This picture reminds me that I don’t need to “straighten up” in order to welcome Jesus into my heart—or into my home. He wants to enter in to the messiness of our lives and assist us; he longs to be in the heart and home of every person, no matter their social status or place of origin.

What a blessing it is to know this! It is easy to practice our faith at church, but this faith of ours is not just a pious pretense, something we wear on Sundays and set aside as soon as we get home. No, we need his grace to live our faith in daily life and to change our habits. The Catholic faith transcends all cultures and social barriers and is meant to provide true meaning and purpose to all we do.

Before we can take the first step and welcome Jesus into our lives, opening the door of our hearts to him, we need to be able to identify his voice and build a relationship of trust and love. This ongoing relationship is essential to living out our Catholic faith, as without a personal relationship we miss out on the true meaning of our faith.

The Most Sacred Heart never enters by force; rather, with gentleness and kindness Jesus calls your name and invites you to the kingdom of love. Fr. Stash Dailley, cofounder and spiritual advisor of the Sacred Heart Enthronement Network, shares that “Jesus loves to rearrange the spiritual furniture of your home.” He reminds us that Jesus often shifts our priorities and reveals what we need to know so that we do not stay in ruts and patterns that hold us back from experiencing the kingdom of God. Jesus doesn’t want us to merely exist; he wants us to thrive, live an abundant life, and experience the kingdom of God here on earth. Here is my own story of transformation through the Sacred Heart.

TESTIMONY FROM A CHANGED HEART

I can recall when the Lord gently touched my heart and invited me to experience his love in a new way through the Sacred Heart devotion. I was feeling burned out and overwhelmed by the demands of life. As a busy wife and mother of a large family, I knew I was running on empty and my love tank needed a supernatural source. I felt my limits and didn’t know where to turn. I needed to find a true source of love that I could share first with my family, and then with others.

I am so grateful that, through this devotion, I experienced the kind of love that changed me from the inside out. I came to understand that before I could truly share love with other people (even my own family), I needed to

experience this love myself! I can recall kneeling before my Sacred Heart image and saying, “Jesus, you can have my family, my future, and my life.” Having said those words, I felt a total sense of freedom!

Over time, Jesus gently revealed to my heart the areas in which I needed to grow and change. After Jesus opened my eyes, I noticed that I was more open to the feedback of my family on areas in our life where we needed to improve. I started to let go and let God lead. After being instructed on how I was hurtful, I had to learn to say, “I am sorry”—not just with my words, but from my heart and with my actions. At first, it was hard for me to let go of my old ways, but my new way of living has brought fresh air to the home, and it even improved my marriage, as my husband was so grateful for my inner transformation. I notice that I smile more, laugh more, and don’t take myself so seriously.

Jesus’s love has no limits if we are willing to receive this tremendous gift and share it with others. I have seen what kind of impact it can have in healing hearts, cultivating a Christian home, and providing new purpose, direction, and meaning in life. I am thankful that Jesus’s loving heart changed my heart.

LET THE LOVE OF JESUS RESTORE YOUR HEART

St. Margaret Mary wrote, “Love, glory and praise forever to the heart of our adorable Savior, which is all love, all

loving, and all loveable, for all the good He will produce and work in souls by establishing the reign of His pure love in well-disposed hearts.”² Would you like to experience the true and authentic love of Jesus Christ and allow him to heal and restore the dysfunction in your home? Jesus invites you to take St. Margaret Mary’s words to heart so you can experience his true and authentic love. This adorable Savior is asking each of us to open our hearts to his truth so that we can experience his graces.

In John’s gospel, Jesus said, “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another” (Jn 13:34). He invites each of us to learn to have compassion and mercy first on ourselves and then on others, especially those who do not know better—those who have experienced love only from a place of dysfunction, who are merely giving what was given to them.

All too often, until we are open to Christ’s love that flows from his Sacred Heart, our own dysfunctional ways hurt the very people we are attempting to love. Although our intentions might be good, our actions, words, and thoughts can easily wound those we care about the most. It is essential that we overcome our pride and see that the Lord wants to continue to form us and make our hearts like his. We must grow to be more sensitive to the matters that hurt God, to love others from a place of wanting what is best for them, to show compassion to others, and to be willing to forgive even when it is difficult.

Jesus wants to transform our hearts from stones to flesh! Listen to the words of the Lord from the prophet Ezekiel: “I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh” (Ez 36:26). Through the Holy Spirit, a powerful transformation occurs; our heavy, burdened spirit is replaced with the new spirit of the Lord. Our cold and lifeless hearts, by the power of Christ, are set on fire with his love. Jesus is offering this transformation to each of us—a spiritual “heart transplant” to restore and renew our hearts. Why? So that we can be more like him and love the way he calls us to love.

Each of us struggles with matters of the heart. We have areas of our hearts that need a spiritual transformation. The transformation begins with admitting you have a heart of stone, or at least parts of it that are stony! When our hearts are “stone,” we lack God’s love and a sense of right and wrong, and we quickly justify our version of love, which can be misguided and confused.

Jesus desires to perform spiritual surgery in our hearts to repair the areas that are broken and wounded. These areas that are pain stricken need the love of Christ to pour out upon them so that healing can begin to take place. Jesus longs for us to allow him to touch our hearts so that we can begin to encounter true love. His love sets us free from our past and the lies that fill our minds and hearts, leading us away from God, who is love.

In a world that focuses on résumés and achievements, the Sacred Heart devotion can provide a spiritual transformation, for we are called to be open to the Lord and willing to live and share our love of Christ with others. St. Margaret Mary shared, “For Our Lord takes special pleasure in the efforts of the unimportant and humble of heart and abundantly blesses their work. . . . His grace works powerfully though gently and imperceptibly.”³

Jesus wants to bless us and help us along this journey of spiritual growth in a gradual and gentle process of spiritual transformation. We must be ready to prepare a place for him in our hearts. Often the crosses and difficulties in our lives help gentle us and prepare us to remove the guards and shields we use as protection. But Jesus can't pour himself into our hearts if we are not willing to make room for him. Often, small steps can lead to significant and lasting long-term success if we make room for Christ. If we can make slow and steady progress in our spiritual growth or implement a holy habit, we will begin to see the impact it can have over time. For example, suppose you ditch a vice such as drunkenness, swearing, over eating, over spending, being rude and impatient with others, or even indulging in sinful media; it will make a world of difference in your life. The key to this life-changing transformation is that you allow Jesus to lead and help you cultivate new holy habits.

DOCILITY: A TRUTHFUL VIRTUE THAT FLOWS FROM THE HEART OF JESUS

Jesus is always inviting us to personal conversion and transformation to overcome sinfulness; we need to grow in the holy habit of docility—that is, “letting go and letting God”—as we grow in holiness. *Docility* is defined as “the willingness to be instructed or taught”; it is the opposite of stubbornness and inflexibility. As Catholic philosopher Dr. Donald DeMarco wrote, “The only thing the docile person wants to know is the truth. The roots of docility are in humility and self-knowledge, while its fruits are in realism and practicality.”⁴

When we allow pride and stubbornness to blind us, it is easy to mislead ourselves and ignore the truth of which our hearts are convicting us. However, when we are docile, we can change and be instructed, allowing the Lord to touch our hearts, guiding us as our will seeks to conform to his, bending and swaying with the fresh breeze of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit always invites us to be docile to the ways of the Lord. The more open we are to the Holy Spirit, the more he will work in us.

We can see firsthand how the Holy Family is the perfect example of holy, docile living. The Blessed Mother is a beautiful example of Christian virtue; she had supernatural faith, hope, and love that enabled her to trust in God’s will even as her child was dying on the Cross. Mary was docile to the Lord: she was open to the instruction and teachings of Christ, and she surrendered to God’s will to

save his people through the death of his beloved Son. The Blessed Mother responded to the Annunciation with trust and even holy wonder as God invited her to be the Mother of God: “May it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). She was willing to allow the Lord to work not only in her life but through her in a way that created new life! Her “yes” has a name: Jesus.

That “yes,” which affects all of us, is a beautiful example of how God respects our free will and of how our choice to serve freely and lovingly is the most excellent gift we give God. When the Blessed Mother agreed to be the Mother of God, she didn’t get the road map to know what would happen; instead, she remained in a posture of docility, and in so doing showed us how to do the same.

Let us pray to Our Lady to lead us closer to Christ as we embark on this powerful journey toward being open to the Lord through his Most Sacred Heart. Jesus’s heart formed under Mary’s heart in her womb, and thus she is our greatest advocate in the kingdom.

ENTER THE SCHOOL OF THE SACRED HEART: OPEN YOUR HEART TO THE LORD

In our technologically advanced society, we have instant access to so much useless and even harmful content. So many distractions make it easy to ignore and neglect our Catholic faith. And yet, as we enter the school of the Sacred Heart, we come to learn how to love God and

others, which helps us to change our patterns of thinking, of learning, and of living.

The Most Sacred Heart invites us to experience his love, mercy, and compassion in a way that transforms our lives. The love that flows from the very heart of Jesus can heal any heart, any home, and even our world. This love is not a fleeting feeling but pours from the very heart of Jesus, and it has markers so distinct that once we experience it we will never be the same.

The gospels are full of ordinary men and women who met the Lord, encountered his love, and left with a great desire to follow him. Think of the Samaritan woman at the well who was converted through a single encounter with him (see John 4:4–42). Jesus spoke truth with love into her life, and with that, she left her water jar and ran back to tell everyone about the Messiah. It says in scripture, “Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him because of the word of the woman” (Jn 4:39); this powerful exchange set into motion the conversion of many other hearts as well. Even though we never got her name, her story forever shows us how Jesus wants to set each of us free from sin, for no sinner is exempt from experiencing the love of God.

So how do we begin to take to heart the lessons from this school of the Sacred Heart? One way is to read through the twelve promises of the Sacred Heart, which Jesus gave to St. Margaret Mary (see appendix 2), and reflect on which of these promises moves your heart. If

you would like to know more about these beautiful promises, be sure to pick up a copy of my book *Secrets of the Sacred Heart* (Ave Maria Press, 2020).

Jesus takes great pleasure in being loved and honored by his creatures. St. Margaret Mary observed, “He has strengthened me in the conviction that He takes great pleasure in being loved, known, and honored by His creatures. This pleasure is so great that, if I am not mistaken, He promised me that all those who are devoted and consecrated to Him will never be lost.”⁵ When we enter into the school of the Sacred Heart and seek to cultivate holy habits, we must first and foremost know that Jesus wants to pour his heavenly blessing upon us and build a true covenant out of love, not fear or intimidation—just like the relationship he built with his disciples and even with the woman at the well.

When we are willing to be open to the Lord and allow him to teach and instruct our hearts, we can set out on a new path. Let us take the first step today by pondering the virtue of docility—and asking the Lord to help us be more open to what he wants to teach us.

LET US PRAY: HOLY HEART OF JESUS PRAYER

As you pray this prayer, reflect on the state of your heart. Then ask the Lord to touch your heart as you prayerfully consider the reflection questions below.

O most holy Heart of Jesus, fountain of every blessing, I adore You, I love You, and with lively

sorrow for my sins, I offer You this poor heart of mine. Make me humble, patient, pure, and wholly obedient to Your will. Grant, good Jesus, that I may live in You and for You. Protect me in the midst of danger; comfort me in my afflictions. Give me health of body, assistance in my temporal needs, Your blessing on all that I do, and the grace of a holy death. Amen.⁶

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Reflect on the following scripture: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, [then] I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me” (Rv 3:20). Is your heart open and ready to welcome Jesus?
2. How can you carve out more time, energy, and effort to cultivate a deeper faith life and be open to the Lord and his life-changing love?
3. In what area of your life can the virtue of docility lead you closer to Jesus?
4. How often does stubbornness and lack of docility lead you to hurt those closest to you? How is the Lord asking you to change?