

ALLOW GRACE TO FILL YOUR LIFE

Promise #1

*I will give them all the graces necessary
in their state of life.*



Our Lord will grant you many graces if you have
the courage to follow him.

—St. Margaret Mary¹

One day my mom came over with a special gift for me: she had just found a beautiful set of holy images, more than a hundred years old, from a local antique mall. They still hang in my front room: the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary.

That first night she gave them to me, I felt a great desire to kneel down and pray beneath the beautiful image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. As I gazed upon the image, the flames rising from his heart seemed brighter

than the sun. The crown of thorns that surrounded it was a painful reminder of the grief and suffering inflicted upon him by our sins; the cross embedded at the top of the heart spoke eloquently of his death, a death that was necessary to bring me close to the Father. And like every Sacred Heart image, this one had a tiny piercing, reminding me of the blood and water that flowed out into the world, washing and cleansing all those who draw near.

I can still recall that moment: kneeling before my Sacred Heart image and saying to Jesus, "I am yours, and you need to help me." I knew I didn't need to wait until I was in a church to pray; Jesus was right there in my very home, my own domestic church, and so I laid my greatest concern at the time at his feet and asked for help.

At that time I was feeling a particularly strong need for spiritual guidance and direction. While the early years of homeschooling had been fruitful and happy, as my children aged, and as more kids were thrown in the mix and the breadth and depth of the subject matter increased, I was becoming increasingly aware of gaps I knew I couldn't fill on my own. Even so, I found it extremely difficult to let go of what I thought was the only way to fulfill my responsibility. I knew we needed to make a change, but I was uncertain how to take the next step forward.

Praying to the Sacred Heart—both on my own and with my husband—provided tremendous graces and imparted a sense of clarity we hadn't experienced before. It helped us work through our concerns and

resulted in a decision to put all the kids in Catholic school. We also decided to move to a new home, closer to the school, in order to reduce travel time in the car and allow us to be part of the local church community. While taking the first step was difficult, through it all we felt the Lord was leading us, and we continue to marvel at the many blessings we have received as a result of giving our lives over to the Sacred Heart.

EXPLORING THE PROMISE

I will give them all the graces necessary in their state of life. Often when we refer to one's "state of life," we think in terms of one's vocation as an ordained religious, a married person, or a single layperson. However, our state of life doesn't end there. In life, we don't just need graces to decide whom we are to marry or how we are going to serve the Lord; we also need graces to live out our vocation each and every day.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, we find that "God has made everything appropriate to its time" (Eccl 3:11). Our state of life is always changing, even if our vocation stays the same. Just as the seasons of nature turn and change, the cycle of life continues on. Jesus wants to offer us his graces and eternal perspective on where we are and what is affecting us now. Regardless of your age or situation, and wherever you are on your faith journey, Christ still wants to walk with you and offer you his graces each moment. "I am the way and the truth and the life," the Lord tells us. "No one comes to the Father except through me." (Jn 14:6). Jesus is offering us a path

to experience the Father; this path is the road that leads to our eternal home.

The *Catechism* tells us that “grace is a *participation in the life of God*” (CCC, 1997). Through our baptism, we are introduced as adopted children into intimate union not just with Jesus but also with the life of the Trinity as we participate in the life of the Church, the Body of Christ here on earth.

Jesus is offering us grace today! He wants to help us in our weakness to overcome our difficulties. So often we limit God and fill our minds with negative statements such as “I can’t do that” instead of saying, “I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me” (Phil 4:13). We are called to change our mindset and seek new graces to strengthen us in our weakness.

Think of St. Paul, whose unbridled zeal once made him a persecutor of the Church, and whose unnamed “thorn of the flesh” (see 2 Corinthians 12:7) caused him such suffering. The Lord did not remove this weakness, despite Paul’s urgent pleas; rather, the Lord assured the apostle, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” Paul continues, “I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor 12:9–10).

In practicing a devotion to the Sacred Heart, we are constantly seeking new graces through discovering Jesus’ holy heart, the fount of all love. When we struggle, we need to seek out these graces so we can better

see him, love him, and experience the strength he is offering. All we have to do is remember that Jesus is offering us graces for our state in life—here, today—and respond.

PONDERING THE PROMISE

It is easy to be so busy or consumed by the worries of the day that you forget to bring them to prayer. Shut your eyes and ask Jesus to show you how much he loves you and to point out an area in your life that could benefit from an infusion of his strength. Then take a few moments to reflect on the following:

1. Do you seek a personal relationship with the Lord and allow him to help you with your daily trials, whether in serious matters or trivial moments? How does faith play out in your life?
2. Think about your state in life. In what areas do you need more grace? Are you struggling with an aspect of your life that you need to surrender to the Lord? Do you have pain or hurt that needs to be tossed into his great furnace of love?
3. Think about how you can take steps to grow in faith and welcome Jesus into your heart. Do you believe that at the end of time, “the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness” and “the just will reign with Christ forever” (CCC, 1060; 1 Cor 15:28)? How does this impact the way you live your life today?

PRAYING THE PROMISE

Perhaps the best first step toward growing in our relationship with Christ is to place our trust in him by offering ourselves up to his care. In her autobiography, St. Margaret Mary shares, “He wishes the consecration of individuals, families, and nations to his Heart.”² Pope Leo XIII explained, “For by consecrating ourselves to him we not only declare our open and free acknowledgement and acceptance of his authority over us, but we also testify that if what we offer as a gift were really our own, we would still offer it with our whole heart.”³

Have you consecrated yourself to the Sacred Heart of Jesus? If not—or if you would like to renew your intention, either now or after a First Friday Mass (see chapter 12)—consider reciting this special prayer of consecration written by St. Margaret Mary.⁴



CONSECRATION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

O Sacred Heart of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to Thee I consecrate and offer up my person and my life, my actions, trials, and sufferings, that my entire being may henceforth only be employed in loving, honoring and glorifying Thee. This is my irrevocable will, to belong entirely to Thee, and to do all for Thy love, renouncing with my whole heart all that can displease Thee.

I take Thee, O Sacred Heart, for the sole object of my love, the protection of my life, the pledge of my salvation, the remedy of my frailty and inconstancy, the reparation for all the defects of my life, and my secure refuge at the hour of my death. Be Thou, O Most Merciful Heart, my justification before God Thy Father, and screen me from his anger which I have so justly merited. I fear all from my own weakness and malice, but placing my entire confidence in Thee, O Heart of Love, I hope all from Thine infinite Goodness. Annihilate in me all that can displease or resist Thee. Imprint Thy pure love so deeply in my heart that I may never forget Thee or be separated from Thee.

I beseech Thee, through Thine infinite Goodness, grant that my name be engraved upon Thy Heart, for in this I place all my happiness and all my glory, to live and to die as one of Thy devoted servants.

Amen.

PRACTICING THE PROMISE

After praying this powerful prayer of the Sacred Heart, reflect on what it means to welcome Jesus. Go to welcomehisheart.com, and watch the free video *To Whom Do You Belong*, by Fr. Stash Dailey.

Ask Jesus to show you what areas of your life you should surrender to him. What parts of your heart need healing? This healing could be spiritual, physical, emotional, or psychological.

Reflect on what your life would look like if you allowed Jesus into your heart and home. If time permits, I recommend taking a few minutes to pray the Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus at the end of this book in appendix 2 .