

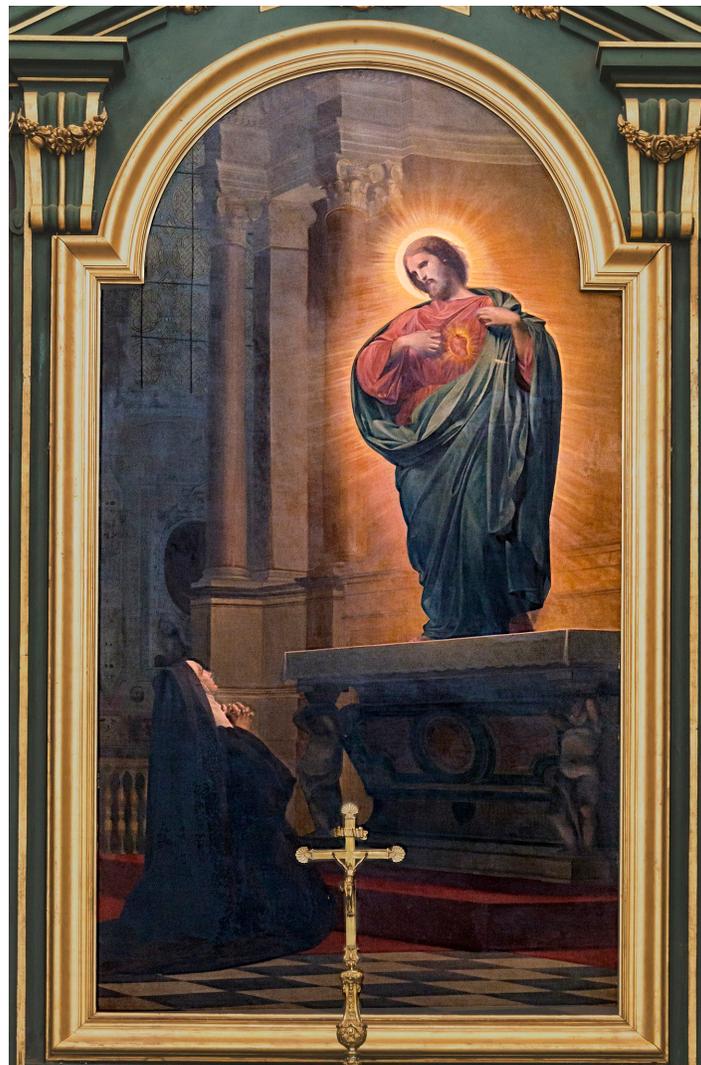


Christian Art

Daily Gospel Reading and Art Reflection

Luke 15:3-7

Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus



Vision of Margaret Mary Alacoque, nun of the Visitation,
Painted by Armand Cambon (1819-1885),
Painted in 1863,
Oil on canvas

Daily Gospel Reading

Luke 15:3-7

Jesus spoke this parable to the scribes and Pharisees:

'What man among you with a hundred sheep, losing one, would not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the missing one till he found it? And when he found it, would he not joyfully take it on his shoulders and then, when he got home, call together his friends and neighbours? "Rejoice with me," he would say "I have found my sheep that was lost." In the same way, I tell you, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner than over ninety-nine virtuous men who have no need of repentance.'

Reflection on the Altar Painting

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Whilst already from the 11th century special devotions to the wounded heart of Jesus existed, it was not until 1670 that a French priest, Fr. Jean Eudes, celebrated the first Feast of the Sacred Heart.

Around the same time, a pious sister by the name of Margaret Marie Alacoque began to report visions of Jesus. He appeared to her frequently, and in December 1673 he asked Margaret Marie to rest her head gently upon his Heart. A year later, in 1674, Margaret Mary reported that Jesus wanted to be honoured under the figure of his Heart of flesh. He asked the faithful to receive him in the Eucharist frequently, especially on the first Friday of the month. A year later Jesus appeared again to Margaret Marie, asking that a Feast of the Sacred Heart be celebrated each year on the Friday following Corpus Christi, in reparation for people's ingratitude for the sacrifice which Christ had made for them.

On 8 May 1873, the devotion to the Sacred Heart was formally approved by Pope Pius IX and in 1899, Pope Leo XIII recommended that all bishops throughout the world observe the feast in their dioceses.

Our painting by Armand Cambon, close friend of Ingres, depicts Margaret Marie Alacoque. She is kneeling in front of an altar above which Jesus is appearing, unveiling his Sacred Heart.

From the depth of my nothingness, I prostrate myself before Thee, O Most Sacred, Divine and Adorable Heart of Jesus, to pay Thee all the homage of love, praise and adoration in my power. Amen.

- St. Margaret Mary Alacoque