

## The Heart of Jesus:

### *From Devotion to the official Eucology of the Roman Mass*

We gather here to dedicate this precious time to an in-depth study, and enriching discussions on the Encyclical Letter *Dilexit nos*— a text that I consider to stand as kind of spiritual testament of Pope Francis. Over these two days, we have discovered the deep value of this document for the life of the Church, and through it, we have glimpsed a little more of the inscrutable riches of Christ (cf. Eph 3,8).

Allow me, however, to quote a text by Benedict XVI to indicate the purpose of my modest contribution to the reflections during these days. It is paragraph 34 of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* of the Holy Father Benedict XVI speaks of the intrinsic relationship between eucharistic faith and eucharistic celebration, pointing out the connection between the *lex orandi* and the *lex credendi*, and he emphasizes the primacy of the *actio liturgical*. He reminds us that the Eucharist should be experienced as a mystery of faith — celebrated authentically and with a clear awareness that "the *intellectus fidei* has a primordial relationship to the Church's liturgical action." And Pope Benedict continues, saying: "Our faith and the eucharistic liturgy both have their source in the same event: Christ's gift of himself in the Paschal Mystery."

This, then is the foundation of the reflection I now begin:

- 1) to present a brief overview of the history of the Masses of the Sacred Heart of Jesus;
- 2) to make a brief liturgical and theological analysis of some elements present in the current eucological form.

Although devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus did not necessarily originate in the Liturgy, it remains deeply connected with the mystery of the Eucharist. Paragraphs 84 and 85 of *Dilexit nos* highlight this very connection. Yet, the Eucharist is not only the consecrated Bread that the faithful receive, with even greater fervor on the first Friday of the month, nor is it only the Holy Host exposed and adored in the pious exercise of Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass. The Eucharist is first, above all, the *actio liturgica* — the sacred action through which the Church perpetuates the memorial of her Lord's Passover, as He commanded to be celebrated until he returns in glory. Indeed, despite strong opposition throughout history, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus gradually found its rightful place within the Eucology of the Roman Mass, ultimately attaining the highest rank in the hierarchy of celebrations: a Solemnity.

For this reason, the axiom attributed to Prosper of Aquitaine and quoted by Benedict XVI in *Sacramentum Caritatis* points us toward a task that we must accomplish before concluding this Symposium, and I intend to do so in the second part of this presentation, that is, in the liturgical and theological analysis:

- 2.a) To understand what elements the recent tradition of liturgical worship of the Sacred Heart of Jesus can offer to our *intellectus fidei*.
- 2.b) To identify the connections we can see between the doctrine intrinsically present in this Eucology and the papal magisterium expressed in *Dilexit nos*.

## Brief historical overview of the Masses of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

First, allow me to present a brief overview of the historical trajectory of the Mass in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

It was a pleasant and surprising discovery for me to learn that the first record we have of public worship of the Sacred Heart of Jesus dates back to the founding of a church in Guarapari, in the State of Espírito Santo, Brazil, in the year 1585<sup>1</sup>. This is considered one of the first churches dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the world, even before the apparitions to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque.

However, a Mass and an office, strictly speaking, were only composed in the second half of the 17th century, by Saint John Eudes. Approval was granted on June 2, 1668, for use exclusively in a monastery in the Diocese of Bayeux; yet by 1670 it had spread to several other French dioceses<sup>2</sup>. The first formal recognition by the Holy See, , did not come until 1783<sup>3</sup>.

Stylistically, this form, known as *Gaudeamus* because of the first word of its *antiphona ad introitum*, appears to be a compilation of texts arranged rather freely.. It is a composition that we could call *sine lege*; yet, it is rich in emotion and devotional inspiration, according to Pierangelo Scaravilli, a scholar who wrote extensively on this subject.<sup>4</sup>

After the apparitions at Paray-le-Monial, Jesuit Father became one of the leading promoters of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He also devoted himself to composing a Mass and an Office specifically for this purpose. This is what became known as the *Venite* Mass — its name, as usual, taken from the first word of the *Antiphona ad introitum*. These texts were later published by one of his confreres, Fr. Croiset, in his famous book *La Dévotion au Sacré Coeur de N.S. Jesus-Christ*. However, because these liturgical texts had not received approval from the Holy See, Croiset's book, despite its perfect orthodoxy, was placed on the Index on March 11, 1704, and remained there until 1887, when the issue seemed to have been resolved<sup>5</sup>.

The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, - - regarded as a vital antidote to the heresy of Jansenism, – inspired a number of pious and as liturgical texts. In addition to the forms already mentioned, in 1694 another form called *Gaudeamus* was composed for use in the Diocese of Besançon, published by Bishop Grammont himself.

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. LÖW Giuseppe, Il Sacro Cuore di Gesù nella storia liturgica, in: *Rivista liturgica* 40 (1953), 209; BUGNINI Annibale, Le Messe del SS. Cuore di Gesù, in: AA.VV., *Cor Jesu. Commentationes in Litteras Encyclicas Pii pp. XII «Haurietis aquas». I. Pars Theologica*, Herder, Roma 1959, 63.

<sup>2</sup> All decrees concerning the authorizations of the various bishops are listed in: EUDES Jean, *Oeuvres complètes. Edition entièrement conforme au texte original avec des introductions et des notes*. I: Le Royaume de Jésus, Lethielleux libraire-éditeur, Paris 1922, VIII, 380-393.

<sup>3</sup> In reality, this initial papal approval was granted exclusively to the religious sisters of the Congregation of Our Lady of Corbeil in the Diocese of Paris. It was not until December 1861 that a slightly more generous approval was obtained. BEAUDUIN Lambert, *Le Sacré Coeur de Jesus dans la liturgie, 95-96*; J.V. BAINVEL, *La Dévotion au Sacré-Coeur de Jésus, Doctrine – Histoire*, Beauchesne Éditeur, Paris 1931, 95; A. BUGNINI, Le Messe del SS. Cuore di Gesù, 63

<sup>4</sup> SCARAVILLI, Pierangelo, *Celebrare le "Investigabiles Divitias Christi" (Ef 3,8) : analisi storica, liturgica e teologica delle messe del Sacro Cuore di Gesù* (Estratto di tesi dottorale, Pontificia Università della Santa Croce, Facoltà di teologia, Roma).

<sup>5</sup> HAMON Auguste, *Histoire de la Dévotion au Sacré-Coeur. IV. Lutttes indécises*, Beauchesne, Paris 1931, 6-9.

In 1696, the Congregation of the Sisters of the Visitation requested permission from the Holy See to celebrate a Votive Mass of the Passion of the Lord, known as *Humiliavit*. This form is particularly significant. Although it did not explicitly refer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, it was celebrated on the Friday of the week following the Solemnity of *Corpus Christi* — symbolically linking it to the love and sacrifice of Christ.

Alongside these milestones in the development of public and liturgical worship of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we can also recall the *Miserebitur* Mass (composed by Cardinal Albani in 1765), which did not gain widespread popularity.

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With the death of Clement XIII on February 2, 1769, the controversy surrounding the devotion to the Heart of Christ was reignited, entering what was probably its most intense phase. This period culminated in the suppression of the Society of Jesus in July 1773. The main work expressing clear dissent to the devotion was the treatise published in 1771 by Camillo Blasi, a lawyer of the Roman Curia. This is the most important work written against devotion to the Sacred Heart, on forming the basis writing and influencing Bishop Scipione de Ricci and the decrees of Synod of Pistoia. Blasi argued that the Congregation of Rites had permitted and approved the worship of the Sacred Heart because it regarded the heart merely as a simple symbol of the Person of Christ. Therefore, he maintained the act of devotion of the faithful should be directed directly to the Son of God and not simply to His heart of flesh. (pp. 99-100).

Once the “anti-devotional fever” subsided, many theologians – especially those of Jesuit formation, responded firmly. They recognized that the Church's recognized veneration of the Heart of the Lord was not founded on the private revelations of Paray-le-Monial, rather on far older and more substantial theological and liturgical traditions.

To restore the devotion to its rightful place, it became necessary either to adapt one of the existing forms of the Mass of the Sacred Heart or to compose a new eucological text. It was precisely in this context that the Mass *Venite ad me* was born in 1771, which brought new features, but also some elements of earlier forms.

In 1778, Cardinal Boschi contributed further to this development by composing the eucological form of the *Egredimini* Mass – which was later forgotten.

Nearly a century after the first Roman approval, Pius IX, encouraged particularly by the personal intervention of Abbot Prospero Guéranger of Solesmes and several representatives of the French episcopate, decreed in August 1856 that the feast be extended to the whole Church.

Following the publication of the Encyclical *Annum sacrum* — on the consecration of the human race to the Sacred Heart of Jesus — by Leo XIII in 1899, the early decades of the 20th century witnessed renewed emphasis for this devotion. Theologians of the time were primarily concerned on the concept of reparation. Pope Pius XI, who strongly supported this aspect, treated it at length in his encyclical *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, dated May 8, 1928 and at the same time granted the highest degree of solemnity to the feast of the Sacred Heart, which even included a privileged octave.

This elevation, carried out by Pius XI, increased the desire for a liturgical form in which the idea of reparation would occupy a central place. Thus, with the help of a team of experts, the *Cogitationes* Mass was composed and, by decree promulgated on June 29, 1929, was extended to the whole Church.

The first half of the 20th century was marked by a growing number of requests from various parts of the Catholic world —motivated above all by the theological contributions of the Liturgical Movement —for a more intense reform of the Church's liturgy. These requests were taken into consideration by Pius XII, who reformed the Easter Vigil in 1951 and, in 1955, the entire Holy Week.

In 1955, Pius XII, wishing to lighten the liturgical calendar, suppressed the Octave of the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. For a moment, this seemed to be a step backward in the movement that had elevated this devotion to the heights of the most noble liturgical expression. However, on May 15, 1956, , the Pope published the Encyclical *Haurietis aquas*, giving new impetus to solemn commemoration of the Heart of Jesus and affirming that the attention given by the Church to this form of devotion surpassed and transcended other forms of piety.(p. 155).

With the convocation and celebration of the Second Vatican Council, and under the inspiration of its first document—the Conciliar Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* — a new Roman Missal was published in 1970, containing both reforms and new compositions. The Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus then gained its most recent eucological version. Pope Paul VI, who published the new Missal, personally regarded the devotion and Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus as among the most beautiful and noble expressions of that true piety which, the Second Vatican Council earnestly desired to promote toward the divine Person of the Incarnate Word.

I would now like to move on to a brief analysis of this important source of our current *lex orandi*, with the aim, of course, of identifying elements that may contribute to our deeper understanding of the *lex credendi*, and that may perhaps shed new light on our understanding of the Encyclical Letter *Dilexit nos*.

## **Liturgical and Theological Analysis of the current Eucological Form for the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus**

From the earlier liturgical schema — that of Pius XI's *Cogitationes* Mass — the *antiphona ad introitum* , the Collect (presented, however, as an alternative to a newly formulated version), the *Super oblata*, and the *Communion antiphon* were retained. The other eucological texts, namely the newly proposed Collect, the Preface, and the *Post communionem*, were original compositions.

Feria VI post dominicam II post Pentecosten

## SACRATISSIMI CORDIS IESU

Sollemnitatis

Ant. ad introitum

Ps 32, 11.19

**C**OGITATIONES Cordis eius in generatione et generationem,  
ut eruat a morte animas eorum et alat eos in fame.

Dicitur Glória in excelsis.

Collecta

Concede, quæsumus, omnipotens Deus,  
ut qui, dilecti Filii tui Corde gloriâtes,  
eius præcipua in nos beneficia recolumus caritatis,  
de illo donorum fonte cælesti  
supereffluentem gratiam mereamur accipere.  
Per Dñm.

Vel:

Deus, qui nobis in Corde Filii tui,  
nostris vulnerato peccatis,  
infinitos dilectionis thesauros  
misericorditer largiri dignaris,  
concede, quæsumus,  
ut, illi devotum pietatis nostræ præstantes obsequium,  
dignæ quoque satisfactionis exhibeamus officium.  
Per Dñm.

Dicitur Credo.

Super oblata

Réspice, quæsumus, Dñme,  
ad ineffabilem Cordis dilecti Filii tui caritatem,  
ut quod offerimus sit tibi munus acceptum  
et nostrorum expiatio delictorum.  
Per Christum.

Y. Dñm vobiscum.

R. Et cum spiritu tuo.

Y. Sursum corda.

R. Habemus ad Dñm.

Y. Grátias agamus Dño Deo nostro.

R. Dignum et iustum est.

Vere dignum et iustum est, æquum et salutare,  
nos tibi semper et ubique grátias ágere:  
Dñme, sancte Pater, omnipotens æterne Deus:  
per Christum Dñm nostrum.

Qui, mira caritate, exaltatus in cruce,  
pro nobis tradidit semetipsum,  
atque de transfixo latere sanguinem fudit et aquam,  
ex quo manarent Ecclésiæ sacramenta,  
ut omnes, ad Cor apertum Salvatoris attracti,  
iugiter haurirent e fontibus salutis in gaudio.

Et ideo, cum Sanctis et Angelis universis,  
te collaudamus, sine fine dicentes:

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dñm Deus Sábaoth ...

Ant. ad communionem

Io 7, 37-38

Dicit Dñm:

Si quis sitit, veniat ad me et bibat.

Qui credit in me, flumina de ventre eius fluent aquæ vivæ.

Vel:

Io 19, 34

Unus militum lancea latus eius aperuit,  
et continuo exivit sanguis et aqua.

Post communionem

Sacramentum caritatis, Dñme,  
sancta nos faciat dilectione fervere,  
qua, ad Filium tuum semper attracti,  
ipsum in fratribus agnoscere discamus.  
Qui vivit et regnat in sæcula sæculorum.

Due to the time available and the depth of the subject matter, I had to make some choices among the liturgical pieces of this Mass. I therefore chose to briefly present a reflection on the *Antiphona ad introitum*, the new Collect, and the Prayer Over the Offerings.

### *Antiphona ad introitum*

Let us deal first with the *antiphona ad introitum*. As we noted earlier, this text is a legacy of Pius XI's form. It consists of two verses taken from Psalm 32 (33) — verses 11 and 19 — and harmonized for liturgical purposes:

Missale Romanum – Editio Typica Tertia	Roman Missal – English translation according to the Third Typical Edition
<i>Cogitationes Cordis eius in generatione et generationem, ut eruat a morte animas eorum et alat eos in fame.</i>	<i>The design of his Heart are from age to age, to rescue their souls from death, and to keep them alive in famine</i>

This Psalm praises the Lord’s providence and faithfulness toward His people. By combining verses 11 and 19, the liturgical composer highlights both the attribute of the Lord's Eternity (from age to age) and His compassionate care. The love of the Lord's Heart flows toward His people in mercy, and cares for them perpetually.

This theme resonates deeply with paragraph 34 of *Dilexit Nos*, in which Pope Francis writes: “*The Gospel tells us that Jesus “came to his own” (cf. Jn 1:11). Those words refer to us, for the Lord does not treat us as strangers but as a possession that he watches over and cherishes. He treats us truly as ‘his own’*”.

This same fundamental spiritual experience must move the hearts loved by the Lord to merciful care for those who suffer. This is why, sensitive to social issues, Pope Francis also continues: “*In contemplating the pierced heart of the Lord, who “took our infirmities and bore our diseases” (Mt 8:17), we too are inspired to be more attentive to the sufferings and needs of others, and confirmed in our efforts to share in his work of liberation as instruments for the spread of his love.*

As a Latin American scholar, I can affirm that, despite the controversies surrounding certain strands of Liberation Theology, we can all agree on this essential point: authentic liberation is expressed in caring for those who suffer as Christ cares for us.

Hearing this antiphon sung during the introit of this Mass gives us a greater understanding of the breadth of the mystery we celebrate on this Solemnity.

### ***Collect / Collecta (first option)<sup>6</sup>***

As mentioned earlier, the first option for Collect in the current liturgical form is a composition that came after Vatican II.

Missale Romanum – Editio Typica Tertia	Roman Missal – English translation according to the Third Typical Edition
<i>Concede, quaesumus, omnipotens Deus, ut qui, dilecti Filii tui Corde gloriantes, eius praecipua in nos beneficia recolumus caritatis, de illo donorum fonte caelesti supereffluentem gratiam mereamur accipere. Per Dominum.</i>	<i>Grant, we pray, almighty God, that we, who glory in the Heart of your beloved Son and recall the wonders of his love for us, may be made worthy to receive an overflowing measure of grace from that fount of heavenly gifts. Through our Lord.</i>

Although this is a new eucological , piece it possesses remarkable theological depth and biblical resonance. Let us examine two key examples:

- **“*dilecti Filii tui / your beloved Son*”**: In the Vulgate, the word *dilectus* appears about 32 times. It is interesting to note that this word is present in the Father's words about Jesus, both at the Baptism and at the Transfiguration. This immense love that the Father has for His Son has also been poured out upon us. And so we see the idea of “*dilectus*” referring also to humanity in the first antiphon of First Vespers of the Solemnity. This understanding echoes the first antiphon of First Vespers for the Solemnity, which proclaims: *In caritate perpetua dilexit nos Deus; ideo exaltatus a terra attraxit nos ad cor suum, miserans.*

<sup>6</sup> The following text is particularly valuable for the study of this Collect: AROCENA Félix María, *Las colectas del Misal Romano: domingos y solemnidades del Señor*, Roma: Centro Liturgico Vincenziano, 2021, 454-465.

- *de illo donorum fonte caelesti supereffluentem gratiam mereamur accipere / may be made worthy to receive an overflowing measure of grace from that fount of heavenly gifts:* As a biblical basis for the idea of an “abundant source,” we can recall several texts. We can recall the four rivers of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:10-14), the song of love that the beloved sings to his beloved in the Song of Songs, comparing her precisely to a garden fountain, a well of living water (Song of Songs 4:15), the prophecy of Isaiah that inspired the name of another beautiful encyclical dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, namely, *Haurietis aquas* by Pius XII (Isaiah 12:3). From the New Testament, we can see the influence of Jesus' dialogue with the Samaritan woman with the promise of new and abundant water that He will give to drink (Jn 4:14); Jesus' exclamation at a Jewish feast: “Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink. ‘Rivers of living water will flow from within him'” (Jn 7:37-38)

Evidently, this idea of the Source did not go unnoticed by Pope Francis. In Chapter 4 of *Dilexit nos*, he makes several references to this idea, as a beautiful image that describes the Heart of Christ. I quote in particular paragraph 96: “*One who is pierced, a flowing fountain, the outpouring of a spirit of compassion and supplication: the first Christians inevitably considered these promises fulfilled in the pierced side of Christ, the wellspring of new life. [...]The open fountain is the wounded side of Christ.*”

This Collect, then, expresses the Church’s confidence in that inexhaustible fountain of divine grace which flows from the Heart of Christ—a source that never ceases to renew and sustain the faithful.

Let us now move on to the study of prayer “Over the Offerings”.

### ***Over the offerings / Super oblata***

Missale Romanum – Editio Typica Tertia	Roman Missal – English translation according to the Third Typical Edition
<i>Réspice, quaesumus, Domine, ad ineffabilem Cordis dilecti Filii tui caritatem, ut quod offerimus sit tibi munus acceptum et nostrorum expiatio delictorum. Per Christum.</i>	<i>Look, o Lord, we pray, the surpassing charity in the Heart of your beloved Son, that what we offer may be a gift acceptable to you and na expiation of your offenses. Through Christ.</i>

In essence, this prayer petitions that the Father's gaze upon the Heart of His beloved Son be the cause of acceptance of the offering that the Church brings at that moment. Fundamentally, what is asked for in this prayer is that the Father's gaze upon the Heart of His beloved Son be the cause of acceptance of the offering that the Church brings at that moment.

The *Sacrificium Ecclesiae*—the Church’s act of offering—is thus intimately linked to Christ’s own sacrifice of love.

Following a tradition that runs through the Old and New Testaments, it is hoped that the Heart of Christ will be the new mercy seat.

This text evokes the biblical concept of the *kapporet* (Ex 25:17–22)—the golden mercy seat atop the Ark of the Covenant—understood by early Christian authors as a prefiguration of Christ Himself. In the New Testament, this identification is explicit. Saint John writes:

In the First Letter of John, for example, we read: “*He is expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world*” (1John 2:2). In the Letter to the Romans, the idea of the mercy seat is even clearer: *They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as an expiation, through faith, by his blood* (Romans 3:24-25).

Certainly, we must consider that the theological concepts of expiation and reparation are not perfect synonyms. But, by spiritual approximation, we can consider them as belonging to the same semantic area. Pope Francis' doctrine on reparation, especially in paragraphs 181 to 204 of *Dilexit nos*, offers a profound reflection on this idea. He writes (no. 201): *Christ alone saves us by his offering on the cross; he alone redeems us [...]. The reparation that we offer is a freely accepted participation in his redeeming love and his one sacrifice. We thus complete in our flesh “what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church” (Col 1:24); and Christ himself prolongs through us the effects of his complete and loving self-oblation.*

As a liturgist, I must say: the ritual way of manifesting our participation in the reparative process is to offer ourselves with the bread and wine in the offertory rite of the Eucharist.

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Undoubtedly, the Preface — rich with biblical-patristic insights on the Heart of Christ — the communion antiphon, and the prayer Post Communion each deserve in-depth study. Given the impossibility of doing so due to our schedule, I am content to close with this reflection.

Every theological study, on any topic, must ultimately lead us to a relationship with God Himself and, consequently, with those whom are loved by Him. The *lex orandi*, the liturgy, has a profound cruciform dynamic: it is capable of uniting us to God through worship and capable of promoting communion among the baptized.

As a SCJ priest and liturgist, , I can only echo the words of Saint Paul: “If I preach the wonders of the Heart of Jesus, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it!”.

Thank you for your kind attention!

*Fr. Eduardo Nunes Pugliesi, scj*