# Celebrate the feasts of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary

The Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus falls on the 19th day after Pentecost (a Friday), and the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary follows on the next day. If you've heard of devotions to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary but aren't quite sure what they're all about, read on for a brief introduction and a few ideas for what your family might do.

## A little background

**Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus**

Writers as early as St. Justin (second century) and St. Pope Gregory the Great (seventh century) drew on John 19:34-35 as a metaphor for the divine graces that flow from the heart of the crucified Jesus: "But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out."

Later spiritual writers, including St. Bernard of Clairvaux (twelfth century) and St. Gertrude the Great (thirteenth century), along with the preaching of Dominican and Franciscan friars, further developed and popularized devotion to the heart of Jesus.

But it was the visions of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque over a period of eighteen months between 1673 and 1675 that eventually prompted formal, universal devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus throughout the Church. Jesus appeared to her in these visions, mourning the indifference of humanity to his great love for them. He asked her (and by extension all

the faithful) to make up for this indifference by her own love, especially by the practice of lovingly receiving Holy Eucharist on the first Friday of every month, and devoting an hour to Eucharistic adoration every Thursday, during which she was to meditate on his agony in the garden of Gethsemane. Moreover, he asked for a feast to be instituted in honor of his Sacred Heart, a request that was fulfilled seventy-five years after St. Margaret Mary's death.

The saint's visions came at a time when Calvinism and Jansenism was spreading throughout Europe; these doctrines emphasized the judgment of God, and preached that some people are predestined to eternal damnation. Devotion to the Sacred Heart was widely embraced among ordinary Catholics, who found comfort in its message of Christ's love and mercy.

## Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Grounded in several references to Mary's heart in the Scriptures (Luke 2:19, 2:35, 2:51), devotion to the heart of Mary was initially developed by St. Anselm and St. Bernard of Clairvaux in the twelfth century; later, St. Bernardine of Siena (fifteenth century) became known as the "Doctor of the Heart of Mary" thanks to his extensive writing on her heart. St. John Eudes (seventeenth century) renewed the devotion, and has been called the father of the devotion in its modern form.

The devotion got a boost from the visions of St. Catherine Laboure in 1830 when Mary revealed to her the image of the Miraculous Medal, as well as the visions of three children in Fatima, Portugal, in 1917. Our Lady of Fatima told the children that "to save poor sinners, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart." In a later vision to one of the children (Lucia), Mary called for the faithful to devote the first Saturday of every month to confession, receiving Holy Communion, and reciting five decades of the Rosary.

Forty-five years later, in the midst of World War II, Pope Pius XII instituted the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary so as to obtain by her intercession "peace among nations, freedom for the Church, the conversion of sinners, the love of purity and the practice of virtue," according to Catholic Culture, where you can read more about the historic precedents of the feast.

## Talking points

Both of these feasts use the heart as a symbol of love.

In the case of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the emphasis is on God's love and mercy. In fact, that love and mercy is so intense that the symbol of the sacred heart is a human heart encircled with a crown of thorns, crowned with a cross, and radiating flames: this is how much Christ loves us.

Marian devotions flow from Mary's privileged status not only as the Mother of God but also as the first fruit of the grace poured out by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. She is the model Christian; devotion to her Immaculate Heart not only calls upon her help, but provides a model for what our own hearts should look like.

## Ways to celebrate

Here are some ways to celebrate these feasts:

- Learn more about the practice of First Friday and First Saturday devotions, and consider practicing them in some form in your family. You can find a ritual for the First Friday Devotion at Catholic News Agency. You'll find the full First Saturdays Act of Reparation at Wikipedia.
- Read the Scripture readings of the day, which you can find at the U.S. bishops' website, usccb.org. The readings for the solemnity include a beautiful Sequence that you can sing or pray before your evening meal.
- Make valentines from Jesus to each child, with a message

echoing the theme of Christ's infinite love.

- Consecrate your family to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary using the acts of consecration found below.
- Cap your celebration with a heart-shaped cake or other heart-themed goodies. Use the time to talk about why Catholics practice devotion to the Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart.

Check out this related article: The Sacred Heart of Jesus • Monthly Devotion for June

## Consecrate your family to the Sacred Heart

### An Act of Consecration of the Family to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Sacred Heart of Jesus, You made clear to Saint Margaret Mary Your desire of being King in Christian families. We today wish to proclaim Your most complete kingly dominion over our own family. We want to live in the future with Your life. We want to cause to flourish in our midst those virtues to which You have promised peace here below. We want to banish far from us the spirit of the world which You have cursed. You shall be King over our minds in the simplicity of our faith, and over our hearts by the wholehearted love with which they shall burn for You, the flame of which we will keep alive by the frequent reception of Your divine Eucharist. Be so kind, O divine Heart, as to preside over our assemblings, to bless our enterprises, both spiritual and temporal, to dispel our cares, to sanctify our joys, and to alleviate our sufferings. If ever one or other of us should have the misfortune to afflict You, remind him, O Heart of Jesus, that You are good and merciful to the penitent sinner. And when the hour of separation strikes, when death shall come to cast mourning into our midst, we will all, both those who go and those who stay, be submissive to Your eternal decrees. We shall console ourselves

with the thought that a day will come when the entire family, reunited in heaven, can sing forever Your glories and Your mercies. May the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the glorious patriarch Saint Joseph present this consecration to You, and keep it in our minds all the days of our life. All glory to the Heart of Jesus, our King and our Father! Please accept our consecration, dearest Mother, and use us as You wish to accomplish Your designs in the world. O Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, and Queen of the World, rule over us, together with the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ, Our King. Save us from the spreading flood of modern paganism; kindle in our hearts and homes the love of purity, the practice of a virtuous life, an ardent zeal for souls, and a desire to pray the Rosary more faithfully. We come with confidence to You, O Throne of Grace and Mother of Fair Love. Inflame us with the same Divine Fire which has inflamed Your own Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart. Make our hearts and homes Your shrine, and through us, make the Heart of Jesus, together with your rule, triumph in every heart and home.

Amen.

## Make an Act of Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

**An Act of Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary**

Most Holy Virgin Mary, tender Mother of men, to fulfill the desires of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the request of the Vicar of Your Son on earth, we consecrate ourselves and our families to your Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart, O Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, and we recommend to You, all the people of our country and all the world. Please accept our consecration, dearest Mother, and use us as You wish to accomplish Your designs in the world. O Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, and Queen of the World, rule over us, together with the Sacred

Heart of Jesus Christ, Our King. Save us from the spreading flood of modern paganism; kindle in our hearts and homes the love of purity, the practice of a virtuous life, an ardent zeal for souls, and a desire to pray the Rosary more faithfully. We come with confidence to You, O Throne of Grace and Mother of Fair Love. Inflame us with the same Divine Fire which has inflamed Your own Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart. Make our hearts and homes Your shrine, and through us, make the Heart of Jesus, together with your rule, triumph in every heart and home.

Amen.