



Society of the Sacred Heart



LETTER FROM THE VICAR GENERAL OF THE INSTITUTE OF CHRIST THE KING

Dear friends of the Institute of Christ the King,

The lay association of the Institute, the Society of the Sacred Heart has its roots in a lay group of Benedictine spirituality which was founded by the late Dr. Dietrich von Hildebrand during the time of the Nazi persecution. Always faithful to the Liturgy and cherishing the spirit of St. Benedict and St. Francis de Sales, this pious group came together over the decades for an annual spiritual retreat. Dr. Karla Mertens, Dr. Alice von Hildebrand, Wolfgang Count Waldstein were among the members of this group which formed the first nucleus of the Society of the Sacred Heart. It is our joy to have among us in the United States one of the founding members of the Society, Miss Katherine Weir. The very first meeting of the Society in America took place at St. Francis de Sales Oratory in St. Louis in March, 2008. Those who were present at this meeting will receive the Cross of Saint Francis de Sales during the first national retreat for the Society, which will be held at the Shrine of Christ the King in Chicago from June 12-14, 2009. All of those faithful interested in joining the Society are invited to attend this spiritual retreat.

The Society of the Sacred Heart aims to foster the spirituality which the Institute of Christ the King has received from its patron saints, St. Francis de Sales, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Benedict. While membership is not necessary, of course, to be a good Catholic, it is our hope that the Society will benefit souls who desire to deepen their Faith and to cultivate a Catholic lifestyle. For this end this newsletter will be sent to you regularly and will contain from time to time the spiritual insight of the General Governor of the Society, Wolfgang Count Waldstein. Assuring you of my prayers during Holy Mass, I remain,

Yours devotedly in Christ the King,

Monsignor R. Michael Schmitz,
Vicar General in the Institute of Christ the King

DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART: WHY ADORE A HEART OF FLESH AND BLOOD?

Deus caritas est. God is charity. the Holy Trinity is an infinite ocean of perfect love. This ineffable mystery is so far beyond our limited human understanding! However, knowing us for what we are, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity mercifully came down to meet us. God became man and thus took to Himself a human heart. He took on the capacity of human love. He wished to love as we love.

In the love of the Heart of Jesus we see a true reflection of eternal love, a dazzling revelation of God's infinite charity and perfection. The love of the Heart of Jesus manifests itself as something sensible, palpable, bringing comfort to all human miseries, granting to our weak souls the support and consolation which they need in order to make their way through the troubles of this life.

God desires that we should find our rest in the Heart of Christ, but also He wants us to go beyond this Heart to reach ultimately the eternal mystery of love hidden in God Himself. The infinite love of Jesus Christ moves us to love God in return.



God gives us the love of His Heart so that we may give Him ours

Faith sees the love of God revealed in the pierced Heart of Jesus on the Cross, and this Faith gives rise to love. (Pope Benedict XVI *Deus caritas est*). Thus, in order to awaken the love of Christ in the

hearts of His children, the Church proposes to us the devotion of the Sacred Heart, which Our Lord Himself revealed to Saint Margaret Mary.

This devotion is the adoration of the Person of the Word Incarnate, considered under the aspect of human love, of which the heart is the living symbol. The heart of Christ is honored and adored because it is substantially united to the Person of the eternal Word, to the Second Person of Person of the Holy Trinity.

This human Heart of Christ is the Heart which God in His mercy has made His very own. This wounded Heart is a living symbol of infinite love. This is why "it is fit and proper that we should consecrate ourselves to His most Sacred Heart--an act which is nothing else than an offering and a binding of oneself to Jesus Christ, seeing that whatever honor, veneration and love is

given to this divine Heart is really and truly given to Christ Himself." (Pope Leo XIII, encyclical *Annum Sacrum*, 1899)

THREE WAYS TO DISCOVER ONE HEART

In order to comprehend more fully the infinite treasures of wisdom and love made available to us in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Divine Providence has given us three holy patrons, Saint Francis de Sales, Saint Benedict, and Saint Thomas Aquinas. Through their writings and their example these saints reflect various aspects of the Sacred Heart—each one in his own unique way: Saint Francis de Sales illustrates the gentle charity of the Sacred Heart; St. Benedict, His spirit of piety and prayer to His Father; St. Thomas Aquinas, the wisdom of His eternal Truth.

SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES: MEET THE GENTLE SAINT

Born in 1564 of aristocratic Savoyard parents, the young Francis was destined to the magistracy according to his father's wishes. After a terrible and prolonged temptation to despair, from which he was suddenly delivered while praying before a miraculous image of Our Lady, he made a vow of chastity and consecrated himself to the Blessed Virgin Mary. After his studies in Padua (1588), Francis was admitted as a lawyer before the Savoyard senate where he was about to be appointed senator. His father had selected one of the noblest heiresses of Savoy to be the partner of his future life, but Francis declared his intention of embracing the ecclesiastical life. Finally his father yielded, and Francis received Holy Orders (1593).



In the following year (1594) he volunteered to evangelize Le Chablais, where the Genevans had imposed the Reformed Faith. Risking his life, he journeyed through the entire district, preaching constantly; by dint of zeal, learning, kindness and holiness he at last obtained a hearing. He confuted the preachers sent by Geneva to oppose him; he converted several prominent Calvinists. A large part of the inhabitants of Le Chablais returned to the true fold (1597 and 1598).

Consecrated Bishop of Geneva in 1602, his first step was to institute catechetical instructions for the faithful, both young and old. He made prudent regulations for the guidance of his clergy and reformed religious communities. He carefully visited the parishes scattered through the rugged mountains of his diocese. The goodness, patience and mildness of our saint became proverbial. He had an intense love for the poor, especially those who were of respectable family. His food was plain, his dress and his household simple. He completely dispensed with superfluities and lived with the greatest economy, in order to be able to provide more abundantly for the wants of the needy. He heard confessions, gave advice, and preached incessantly.

Together with St. Jane Frances de Chantal, he founded (1607) the Institute of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin, for young girls and widows who, feeling themselves called to the religious life, have not sufficient strength, or lack inclination, for the corporal austerities of the great orders. After many apostolic labors, Francis died in 1622 at the age of fifty-six. He was canonized in 1665 and declared Doctor of the Universal Church by Blessed Pope Pius IX in 1877. He is patron saint of journalists and Catholic writers. Blessed Pius IX, in his Bull proclaiming him Doctor of the Church calls the Saint "The Master and Restorer of Sacred Eloquence". *"The writings of Francis de Sales, filled with celestial doctrine are a bright light in the Church, pointing out to souls an easy and safe way to arrive at the perfection of a Christian life."* --*Breviarium Romanum*

SPIRITUAL WISDOM

Nothing is so strong as gentleness, nothing is so gentle as true strength.

The well-being of the home depends on the parents' words, but far more on their behavior.

Christian perfection does not consist in being perfect or in acting perfectly. It is the striving for perfection which is important.

God wants to see us faithful in the small things that He entrusts to us. This is far superior to our burning desire to do big and grand things, which seldom come our way.

Instead of disturbing ourselves because we have made so little progress in the past, let us diligently strive to do better in the future. Let your heart be full of courage and your courage full of confidence in God, for He will never abandon you if you do not first abandon Him.

SUGGESTED READING

Introduction to the Devout Life

By Saint Francis de Sales, Vintage Spiritual classics

Saint Francis de Sales: Sage and Saint

By Fr. Andre de Ravier, S.J., Ignatius Press

Thy Will Be Done: Letters to Persons in the World

By Saint Francis de Sales, Sophia Institute Press

SAINT BENEDICT: PATRON OF PRAYER AND LITURGY

Born in 480 of a noble family, St. Benedict spent his boyhood and adolescent years in Rome. Having witnessed there luxurious living and loose morals, he left the city about the age of twenty and lived in the company of some virtuous men about forty miles outside the city. "For God's sake he deliberately chose the hardships of life and the weariness of labour," writes his biographer, Saint Gregory the Great. Soon he fled deeper into the mountains, where he came into contact with a hermit, Romanus, and lived himself as a hermit for three years in a cave about 10 feet deep. During these three years of solitude, he matured both in mind and character—the youth had become a man. His fame spread, and the monks from a nearby monastery begged him to become its abbot. These lax monks resisted Benedict's efforts for reform and finally tried to poison him. Preserved by divine intervention, Benedict returned to his cave. From this time his miracles became frequent. Many people were attracted by his sanctity and character. They came to Subiaco wishing to live under his guidance. St. Benedict had built for them twelve monasteries in the valley, placing in each one a superior with twelve monks. He lived in a thirteenth, but remained the father abbot of all. With the establishment of these monasteries began the schools for children. The remainder of St. Benedict's life was spent in realizing the ideal of monasticism which he has left us drawn out in his Rule: *the monk is a man who searches God through prayer and the work of his hands*. For him the Liturgical prayer of the Divine Office gives rhythm and structure to daily life.

SPIRITUAL WISDOM

Rule of St. Benedict, Chap. 20: Reverence in prayer

If, when we wish to make some suggestion to the powerful, we presume not to speak to them except with humility and reverence; with how much greater reason ought we to present our supplications in all humility and purity of devotion, to the Lord God of all things? And let us bear in mind, that we shall be heard, not for our many words, but for our purity of heart, and our penitential tears (Mt 6:7) Our prayer, therefore, ought to be short and pure, unless perchance it be prolonged by the inspiration of Diving Grace. Yet, let all prayer made in common be short, and when the sign has been given by the Prior, let all rise together.

SUGGESTED READING:

The Rule of Saint Benedict

Baronius Press, Vintage Spiritual Classics

Life of Saint Benedict, by St. Gregory the Great

TAN Books & Publishers

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS: HUMBLE TEACHER OF TRUTH

Born in 1225 into an Italian family of nobility, Thomas was educated from an early age by the Benedictines of the neighboring abbey at Monte Cassino. What was going to make Thomas a cherished theologian over centuries was the fruit not only of the new Aristotelian learning, but also of ancient Benedictine "humanitas." At the age of eighteen Thomas received the Dominican habit, while he was a student at the University of Naples. Thomas' own family members were opposed to his joining the Dominicans and kidnapped him. However, when he overcame their attempts to seduce him, they let him go. Thomas was sent first to Paris and then on to Cologne, where he studied and served under the famous Dominican St. Albert the Great. Recommended by Albert, Thomas, somewhat under aged and academically under qualified, returned to Paris. After four years of study, he was recognized as master of theology. After serving as professor of theology in Paris for three years, Thomas became conventual lector in Orvieto, in close collaboration with the papal court. Having then served as regent professor in Rome, he returned to his old post in Paris in 1268. His last teaching assignment was in Naples (1272-1274). The volume of Thomas' writing was extensive, eventually leaving three great syntheses of theology, numerous volumes of disputed questions, a dozen commentaries on Aristotle, along with other theological, philosophical, and topical writings. He also may be counted among the great mystics. Toward the end of his life, on December 6, 1273, during the time in which he was completing the section on sacraments in his great *Summa Theologiae*, he experienced a transforming vision. "All that I have written seems like no more than straw," he said to his pupil Reginald. He stopped writing on his works in progress. Some three months later, he died. In 1323 he was canonized by Pope John XXII.

SPIRITUAL WISDOM: ADVICE FROM ST. THOMAS

Start with that which is easy in order to arrive at that which is more difficult. Do not try to understand that which is beyond you.

Be slow to speak, and slow to go to places where there is much talk.

Show yourself amiable to all. However, do not be too familiar with anyone, because familiarity begets contempt.

SUGGESTED READING:

Catena Aurea (The Golden Chain),

Commentary on the Gospels compiled by St. Thomas Aquinas, Online at www.catecheticsonline.com/CatenaAurea

Thomas Aquinas and the Liturgy, David Berger
Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE SOCIETY

Around the time of the First World War a Belgian Benedictine monk, Dom Eugene Vandeur, had the idea of founding a community of Benedictine oblates who would serve as a monastery in the world. Although this community was not established, the idea remained. In the late 1920s another Benedictine monk, Dom Alois Mager, OSB, Margaret Solbrig, Dr. Dietrich von Hildebrand were able to establish such a community. Originally, the members were to be women living in the world, either with their families or in small groups, who would resolve to live according to the Rule of St. Benedict while following their professions. Thus, from the very start, the Rule of St. Benedict and the intellectual foundation offered by Dietrich von Hildebrand played an influential role in the development of the Society. The Society, or *Gemeinschaft*, developed especially in Munich, Germany, and in Salzburg, Austria. Due to the professional and social prominence of certain of its members, the existence of the *Gemeinschaft* was a closely guarded secret.

When Hitler came to power in the 1930s, certain members of the *Gemeinschaft* were in great danger. Some were of Jewish background, while others were friends or collaborators of Dietrich von Hildebrand, who was a declared enemy of the Nazis. Although von Hildebrand and a few members were able to escape to New York in 1940, it was a very difficult time for the *Gemeinschaft* in Europe. Some of the members were in concentration camps, others secretly assisted Jews, while yet other members were killed. The members of the *Gemeinschaft* did their best to support one another morally, spiritually, as well as materially.

Meanwhile, the *Gemeinschaft*, continued to grow in the United States, under the direction of Dietrich von Hildebrand. The members continued to remain in close contact with one another, while gathering together for prayer and spiritual conferences from time to time. Every year there was a spiritual retreat in Bayerisch-Gmain, a village nestled in the Bavarian Alps near the Austrian border, which afforded a refuge during the tumultuous times of the late 1960s and the 1970s. In time, however, membership in the *Gemeinschaft* began to diminish. Certain members went to their eternal reward, others entered particular apostolic work, while others just drifted away due to bad health, distance, etc.

In the early 1990s the Bavarian house in which the *Gemeinschaft* had met over the years was given to the Institute of Christ the King. Its members continued to meet under the spiritual leadership of the Institute, into which finally the *Gemeinschaft* was incorporated in 2004 at the request of its members. On the feast of Saint Benedict, March 21, 2006, members of the *Gemeinschaft* were among the first to receive the Cross of Saint Francis de Sales in a ceremony which officially established the Society of the Sacred Heart as a lay association of the faithful in the Institute of Christ the King. The Society already has numerous members in Germany, Austria, France, Belgium, and Italy, and is also rapidly growing throughout the United States.

UPCOMING EVENT

ANNUAL SPIRITUAL RETREAT

Friday, June 12—Sunday, June 14

Please see attached flier for information

For Questions and RSVPs, please contact:

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FURTHER SUGGESTED READING

Christ in His Mysteries, Blessed Dom Columba Marmion
Zaccheus Press

I Believe in Love:

A personal retreat based on the Teaching of St. Therese of Lisieux
Father Jean du Coeur de Jesus d'Elbee
Sophia Institute Press

Transformation in Christ, Dietrich von Hildebrand
Ignatius Press