

THE VISITATION

*The Sacred Heart of Jesus*





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“My sweet Jesus, I unite my soul to Thy soul, and my heart, my mind and my intentions to Thine; and thus united, I present myself to Thy Father. Receive me, O Eternal Father, through the merit of Thy Beloved Son.”

(Thoughts and Sayings of St. Margaret Mary)

*Front Cover Art—Visitation Icon  
Georgetown Visitation by Anthony Skiscim*

*Right: Brooklyn Visitation Monastery  
Sacred Heart Chapel, stained-glass window*



## *From Sister Susan Marie Kasprzak, VHM, President of the Second Federation of Visitation Sisters of Holy Mary*

### *Live † Jesus*

Dear Spiritual Friends,

The Visitation Sisters are so pleased that you are using this booklet to open your mind and heart to receiving the graces of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Our National Visitation Salesian Network Committee created this devotional tool because our Visitation family is rooted in a heart-to-heart spirituality based on Living † Jesus by fully uniting our hearts with the Heart of Jesus Christ. This spirit animates our monastic communities which we consider sanctuaries of the Sacred Heart.

Many Catholics [and other Christians] have heard of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Not as many know of Visitation's close connection to this gift of our faith. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is prominent in the early writings of spiritual direction between our founders, Saints Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal. In describing the coat of arms for the new Visitation Order, St. Francis wrote to St. Jane:

*I thought we ought to take as our arms a heart pierced by two arrows, enclosed in a crown of thorns, this heart serving as a setting to a cross which will rise from there, and will be inscribed with the Sacred names of Jesus and Mary....Truly our little Congregation is a work of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. The dying Savior gave birth to us through the wound of His Sacred Heart.*

Six decades later, a Visitation Sister would become instrumental in promulgating the spread of a worldwide devotion to the Sacred Heart. In 1673, Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, a Sister of the Visitation in Paray-le-Monial, France, began to receive revelations and visions of Jesus in which He asked her to share the message of His heart burning with a deep love for His people.

Under direction from the Monastery Superior, Sister Margaret Mary collaborated with Father Claude de la Colombière, a Jesuit priest who ministered to the Sisters at Paray-le-Monial. As Sister Margaret Mary's confessor, Fr. Claude was instrumental in verifying her revelations and promoting devotional practices to the Sacred Heart beyond the monastery walls that were part of the cloister in which Sister Margaret Mary lived. Within the monastery, the Visitation Sisters, who were initially reluctant to believe Sister Margaret Mary's apparitions, dedicated themselves to the Sacred Heart and made reparation by their life of prayer for hearts grown cold throughout the world.

While Sister Margaret Mary Alacoque's private devotion to the Sacred Heart was not new, Visitation was the first religious group to publicly consecrate themselves to this devotion. The Roman Catholic Church canonized Sister Margaret Mary Alacoque in 1920 and Father Claude de la Colombière in 1992.

It is our prayer that this little devotional booklet may lead you to a knowledge of the unique history of devotion to the Sacred Heart and foster in your life an intimate relationship with the Sacred Heart of Jesus as you experience the peaceful sanctuary of the Sacred Heart. We hope and pray this devotional tool will help draw you closer to Our Lord so that you come to know and experience the deep love of Christ's Heart for you.

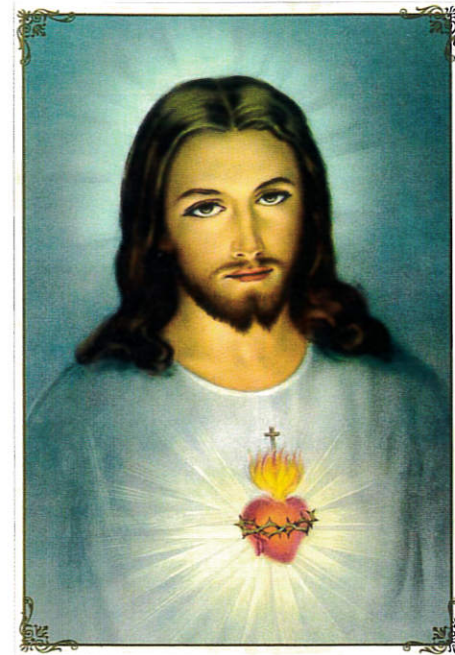
– Sister Susan Marie Kasprzak, VHM



*Visitation of Holy Mary emblem referred to in St. Francis de Sales' writing as a heart pierced by two arrows surrounded by a crown of thorns. These emblems were often distributed like devotional scapulars.*



Painting of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque and Sacred Heart of Jesus in Georgetown.



*"I have engraved  
your name on  
my heart."*

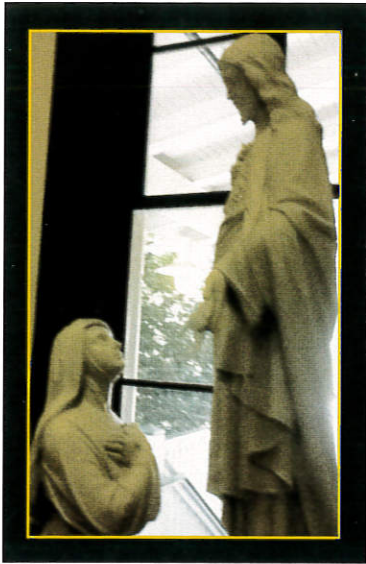
One of the most important religious figures in the history of the Visitation Sisters of Holy Mary is Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque whose visions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus inspired the practice of First Friday Adoration. St. Margaret Mary's steadfast practice of the "little virtues," particularly patience, humility, and charity, helped her to endure much suffering on the road to sainthood. She was known to say, "Nothing for

me, all for Christ; Nothing to me, all for Christ;"echoing the words of St. Francis de Sales, "Ask for nothing. Refuse nothing."

St. Margaret Mary Alacoque's life led her to this profound understanding of accepting God's goodness and His Cross.

It was in a spirit of selflessness that St. Margaret Mary approached her prayer life and her work. Her intense devotion and willingness to persevere in the face of criticism from family and other sisters in her community were rewarded with many visions of the beautiful, suffering Heart of Jesus. Imagine how the Lord spoke to her!

This pamphlet is a simple offering of a way to experience the profound message of these visions and the promises of blessings to those who embrace a devotion to the First Friday Holy Hour. St. Margaret Mary's faith is a model for us as she was a woman who recognized her total dependence on God.



*Statues of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque and the Sacred Heart of Jesus—in vestibule outside the Chapel of the Sacred Heart leading from Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School into the Monastery Chapel.*

## *Life of Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque*

Saint Margaret Mary was born in Hautecour, France, on July 22, 1647, entered the Visitation monastery in Paray-le-Monial May 25, 1671 at the age of 24, and died on October 17, 1690, at the age of 43. She was beatified in 1864 and canonized in 1920.

Her life was marked with unusual sufferings from an early age. When her father died she and her mother were forced to live with relatives who made their life miserable by their verbal and sometimes physical abuse.

Her life in the monastery was marked by extraordinary events: for 18 months she received visions of the Sacred Heart who revealed to her the sufferings of His Heart

because of the coldness in the world. The Jansenist heresy had caused a wide chasm between God and his people by insisting that they were not worthy of any kind of relationship with God. The revelations of the Sacred Heart to St. Margaret Mary countered this heresy with a strong message of the love of God for His people and His desire for their love in return.

St. Margaret Mary suffered from the initial disbelief of her superior and the Sisters in her community. Finally, a Jesuit, Claude de la Colombière, believed these visions were authentic and was her advocate in spreading the message of the Sacred Heart.

St. Margaret Mary, with the assistance of Father de la Colombière, fulfilled the desires of the Sacred Heart by fostering in the Church devotional practices of receiving the Eucharist on the First Fridays of the month and praying during a Holy Hour preceding or on the First Friday of the month. Finally, the Church established the Solemnity of the Feast of the Sacred Heart in the universal Church in 1856.

– Sister Mary Berchmans Hannan, VHM

## *The Promises of the Sacred Heart*

To be fulfilled for those who devote time in silent prayer and contemplation of the Blessed Sacrament and of the Sacred Heart, especially on First Fridays:

1. I will give them all the graces necessary for their state of life.
2. I will establish peace in their families.
3. I will bless every house in which the picture of My Heart shall be exposed and honored.
4. I will console them in all their difficulties.
5. I will be their refuge during life and especially at the hour of death.
6. I will shed abundant blessings upon all of their undertakings.
7. Sinners shall find in My Heart a fountain and boundless ocean of mercy.
8. Tepid souls shall become fervent.
9. Fervent souls shall rise speedily to great perfection.
10. I will give to priests the power of touching the hardest hearts.
11. Those who propagate this devotion shall have their names written in My Heart never to be blotted out.
12. I promise thee in the excessive mercy of My Heart that My all powerful love will grant to all who communicate in the First Friday of the month for nine consecutive months the grace of final perseverance; they shall not die in My displeasure. My Divine Heart shall be their safe refuge.



1

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

*Prayerful Personal Reflection:*

“Pour forth we beseech thee O Lord, thy grace into our hearts.” So begins the petition to Our Lady in the final prayer of the Angelus. In the same way, St. Margaret Mary prays for the grace found in the Sacred Heart of Jesus to be poured out for the salvation of souls. In her visions, St. Margaret Mary recognized our need for the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ to fill our spirits, but this will happen only if we are open to receiving His grace. Our spirits are hungry for this grace, but perhaps in the busyness of our lives and work, we fail to see the need to offer time in prayer to Jesus. We fail to see that this grace we seek will be poured out in abundance from the Sacred Heart of Jesus if we but open our hearts to His heart. One way that we may experience this is in the monthly adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on First Fridays. St. Margaret Mary encouraged us to immerse our hearts in the Heart of Jesus with this special devotion in order to experience the graces necessary to be our most authentic selves, whether that be in the married or single life, the religious or lay. No matter the state of life in which we live, we will receive graces to enrich our work if we sincerely seek to do all things with the intention of offering ourselves and our work to God, and accept the call to align our hearts with the Heart of Jesus.

*From Scripture:*

For this reason I fall on my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth receives its true name. I ask God from the wealth of his glory to give you grace through His Spirit to be strong in your inner selves so that Christ may find a home in your hearts through faith. I pray that you may have your roots and foundation in love, so that you together with all God’s people may have the power to understand how broad and long, how high and deep is Christ’s love. Yes, may you come to know his love – although it can never be fully known – and so be completely filled with the very nature of God. (Ephesians 3:14-19)

*From St. Francis de Sales:*

Great opportunities to serve God rarely present themselves but little ones are frequent. “Whoever will be faithful over a few things will be placed over many,” says the Savior. Do all things in the name of God and you will do all things well. Provided you know how to fulfill your duties properly, then whether you eat or drink, whether you sleep or take recreation, you will profit greatly in God’s sight by doing all these things because God wishes you to do them.

*From St. Margaret Mary Alacoque:*

Go courageously to God along the way He has traced out for you, steadfastly embracing the means he offers you. Our Lord is satisfied with your good will. His heart will never refuse you the graces necessary for fulfilling entirely all he asks of you.



*Painting of the Sacred Heart that hangs over the sanctuary light in the Sisters’ Choir adjacent to the St. Louis Visitation Chapel.*



2

## *I will establish peace in their families.*

### *Prayerful Personal Reflection:*

While many stresses may encroach upon an individual's or family's peace, the words of Scripture offer hope and encouragement for healing. Worries about money, hurt feelings, misunderstanding, anger, or any of these may lead to disharmony in one's life and family. St. Margaret Mary counsels prayer and reflection before the Blessed Sacrament as a way to acquire peace of mind and heart. We are called to recognize that anxiety and disquietude come not from God but from sin, so often from our own selfish tendencies. Perhaps we indulge in nursing our sorrows, immersing ourselves in self-pity rather than in the selfless love of Jesus. We often justify ourselves with many reasons for our unhappiness or anger even though we know if we listen to the voice of Jesus, then we will learn to set our sights on His Way of the Cross. By uniting our sorrows with His, perhaps we can bring peace to our homes and our own hearts. St. Margaret Mary believed that the only way to discover peace is to immerse ourselves in prayer and quiet contemplation of Jesus and His Sacred Heart. It is here that we will learn gratitude and serenity.

### *From Scripture:*

Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give this as the world does. Do not be worried and upset. Do not be afraid. (John 14:27-29)

### *From St. Francis de Sales:*

We must in all things and everywhere live peacefully. If trouble exterior or interior comes upon us, we must receive it peacefully...Therefore let us not be troubled or think that we are in disfavor with God. Thoughts which cause disquiet or agitation of spirit are not from God who is the Prince of Peace; they are temptations and should be rejected as such.

### *From St. Margaret Mary Alacoque:*

May the peace of the adorable Heart of Jesus Christ ever fill our hearts so that nothing may be able to disturb our serenity!

Keep your heart in peace and let nothing trouble you, not even your faults. You must humble yourself and amend them peacefully, without being discouraged or cast down, for God's dwelling is in peace.



*Painting of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque and Sacred of Heart of Jesus that hangs above the altar in the Sacred Heart Chapel in the Brooklyn Monastery.*



3

*I will bless every house in which the picture of My Heart shall be exposed and honored.*

*Prayerful Personal Reflection:*

How often have we heard this cliché? “Home is where the heart is.” Perhaps this is yet another way in which to interpret this promise. If when we enter our home we find ourselves surrounded with images of our faith, the image of the Sacred Heart in particular, will we have a new understanding of our blessings? So often what we see, what we choose to look at or focus on influences our emotions or thoughts. Could the presence of a powerful, beautiful image of the Heart of Jesus stir us toward prayer, to gratitude, to love? Are not these the very blessings we seek? When we genuflect toward the altar and the Blessed Sacrament, we reverence and remember the Real Presence of our Savior. Perhaps the presence of the image of the Sacred Heart in our home would remind us that the heart of our home should be devotion to Jesus. The blessings which might flow from such devotion are incalculable.

*From Scripture:*

How good and pleasant when God’s people live together in unity!  
(Psalm 133:1)

Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me so that they may be one as we are one... I pray for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be one in us so that the world may believe that you have sent Me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity.  
(John 17:11, 20-23)

*From St. Francis de Sales:*

Marvel at God's goodness. How good God has been on my behalf! How good indeed! Lord, how rich your heart in mercy and how generous in good will! My soul, let us always recall the many graces He has shown us.

*From St. Margaret Mary Alacoque:*

He is the source of all blessings and will bestow them wherever the picture of his divine Heart is placed and honored. The devotion to his Sacred Heart contains ineffable treasures which he wishes to bestow upon all hearts of good will.



*Sacred Heart of Jesus in left panel and St. Claude de la Colombière, SJ stained-glass windows in the Visitation Monastery Chapel in Georgetown.*



4

*I will console them in all their difficulties.*

*Prayerful Personal Reflection:*

The Catholic Catechism teaches us that, “those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God’s mercy for the offense committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, by example, and by prayer labors for their conversion.” It is precisely this mercy and peace about which St. Margaret Mary speaks when she shares the promise that we will be consoled in all of our difficulties if we trust Jesus in prayer. Every day we face our own personal struggles while at the same time encountering the enormity of evil in our world. Where else but in the strength and mercy of Jesus could we ever hope to find comfort? How often do we reflect on the imperfections of the world or of ourselves and try to fix them ourselves only to discover how little our actions achieve? Perhaps we can find a profound consolation in the knowledge and faith in God’s abundant mercy as revealed through Scripture and through the visions of His Saints. How comforting it is to immerse our thoughts in the Heart of Jesus, especially in our darkest moments. We may then remember that consolation does not mean that we will be free of suffering, but that we can find a refuge, a warm embrace in the midst of it. We must look only to the Cross to recognize that consolation comes when we accept the suffering as God’s permissive will and look only to God in love and trust.

*From Scripture:*

Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. (John 14:1-3)

*From St. Francis de Sales:*

To take up our cross and follow Jesus Christ means nothing other than receiving and accepting all the troubles, contradictions, afflictions and mortifications that come our way in life. We should accept them with complete submission and resignation. We ought not select our own crosses, but we should accept and carry those that are offered to us. In this way we imitate our Savior who did not choose His own cross, but humbly took upon Himself the one prepared for Him.

*From St. Margaret Mary Alacoque:*

Take up your abode in this adorable Heart; bring to It your little vexations and annoyances, and your heart will then be calmed. You will find in this divine Heart the remedy for your ills, strength in your weakness, and a refuge in all your needs.



*Statue of the Sacred Heart, on entrance drive to Visitation School and Monastery, Mendota Height, MN.*



5

*I will be their refuge during life and especially at the hour of death.*

***Prayerful Personal Reflection:***

So many prayers that we recite each day remind us that God is with us, especially at the hour of our death. Think of the two thieves hanging beside Jesus on the Cross. Even at that moment of greatest suffering, Jesus offered refuge to the repentant sinner. Do we truly trust in Jesus and His capacity to be our refuge, especially in the last moments of our life? No one likes to think about death or of our mortality. What gives us more comfort than trying to escape the fact of our mortality may be to remember that our interior peace depends on seeking refuge in Jesus. Doing so during life helps us to be ready to accept his offer of eternal refuge. Consider the night prayer: "Protect us Lord as we stay awake, watch over us as we sleep, that awake we keep watch with Christ and asleep rest in His peace." Try spending some time each day asking Jesus to live in your heart. If we are at home in the refuge of His love now, we can count on a home there at our last moment.

***From Scripture:***

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack / In green pastures you let me graze; / to safe waters you lead me; / you restore my strength. / You guide me along the right path / for the sake of your name. / Even when I walk through a dark valley / I fear no harm for you are at my side; / your rod and staff give me courage. (Psalm 23:1-4)

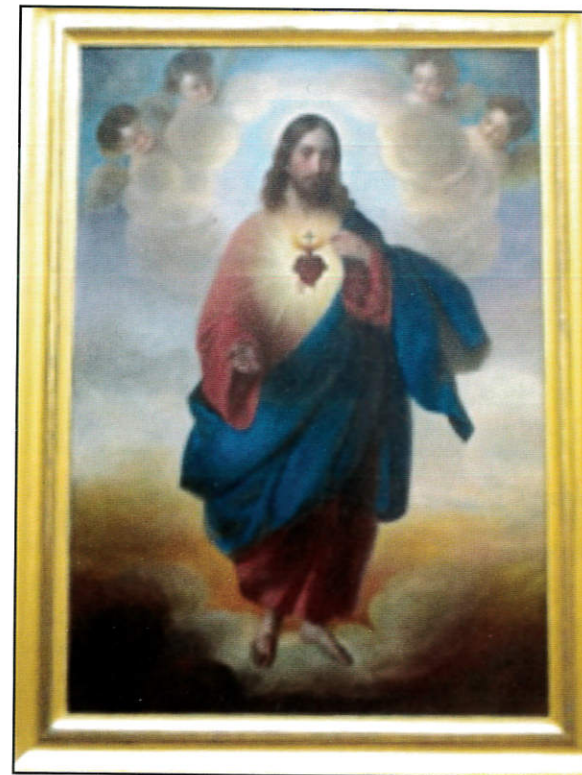
I love you, Lord, my strength / Lord, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer / My God, be my rock of refuge, / my shield, my saving horn, my stronghold! / Praise the Lord, I exclaim! / I have been delivered from my enemies. (Psalm 18)

***From St. Francis de Sales:***

We must fear death without fearing it; that is we must fear it with a fear which is both tranquil and full of hope since God has left us so many means to die well. Among others, He has left us contrition, which is so general that it can erase the guilt of all kinds of sin. We have the Sacraments of Holy Church to wash us from our iniquities, for they are like channels through which the merits of the Savior's Passion flow into us so that through them we recover grace when we have lost it. All this being so, what remains except to live abandoned to the events of Divine Providence, asking for nothing and refusing Him nothing?

***From St. Margaret Mary Alacoque:***

In the excess of His love, He willed, through the merits of His death, to win for us a life of eternal happiness and save us from a death of eternal misery. Let us bless and thank Him for such ardent charity.



*Sacred Heart painting,  
Georgetown Visitation  
Preparatory School.*



6

*I will shed abundant blessings upon all of their undertakings.*

*Prayerful Personal Reflection:*

What a comfort to imagine that the Lord blesses all of our work when we place our trust in Him! So often we think that our success depends entirely upon our own efforts. If we but try harder or work longer, our efforts will be rewarded with great success. While there is nothing wrong with hard work and consistent effort on its own, this energy may produce much less than the efforts supported by prayer. We know only too well how little time there is to do our best work. We must throw ourselves at the feet of Jesus and offer Him our meager efforts and see what He can make of them. How much greater are our efforts when offered for the love of God in the needs of a sick friend, an ailing loved one, or a forgotten soul?

*From Scripture:*

As they continued their journey he entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary who sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, "Lord do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me? The Lord said to her in reply, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part." (Luke 10: 38-42)

*From St. Francis de Sales:*

Do all things in the Name of the Lord and you will do all things well.

In all you do, rely entirely on God's Providence on which all our plans depend for their success. Nevertheless, do your part peacefully assured that if you trust in God, the result will always be for the best.

*From St. Margaret Mary Alacoque:*

Let us entreat Him to establish His reign in all hearts. Let us contribute thereto with all our power; in order to do this, let us spare neither life nor possessions.

This divine Heart wishes to be the absolute Master of yours....It is the inexhaustible Source of all good and seeks especially to give and communicate Itself to faithful souls and to be the motive power of all your actions.



*St. Margaret Mary & the Sacred Heart; Artist: Michael O'Neill McGrath, OSFS*



7

## *Sinners shall find in My Heart a fountain and boundless ocean of mercy.*

### *Prayerful Personal Reflection:*

Whether in a fountain springing from the earth or in the immense ocean constantly moving, water is a universal symbol of life and renewal. Water's life-giving force covers the majority of the earth and is constantly renewed; it makes sense to think of The Heart of Jesus as an ocean of mercy always washing away our sins as it smooths the sand each time it flows in and out. How comforting to imagine the enormity of the blessing of this mercy in the face of our sinfulness! Perhaps we might consider sharing our experiences as a result of this ocean of mercy by showing mercy to those whom we meet. One beautiful way to Live Jesus would be to share this good news by inviting all whom we meet to swim in this ocean of mercy with us.

### *From Scripture:*

Be merciful just as your Father is merciful. Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you. (Luke 6: 36-38)

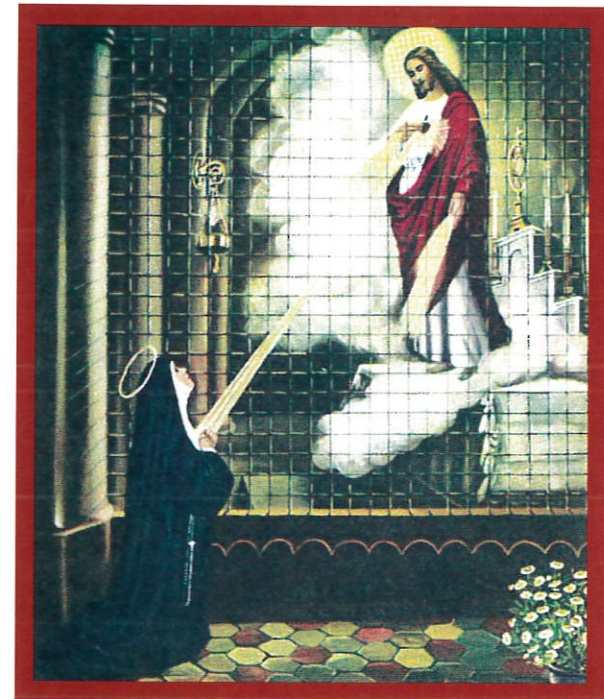
### *From St. Francis de Sales:*

Certainly nothing can so effectively humble us before God's mercy as the multitude of his benefits, and nothing can so deeply humble us before his justice as our countless offenses. Let us consider what he does for us and what we have done against him, and as we reflect on our sins, one by one, let us also consider his graces one by one. There is no need to fear that knowledge of his gifts will make us proud if only we remember this truth, that none of the good in us comes from ourselves . . . A lively consideration of graces received makes us humble because knowledge of them begets gratitude for them.

### *From St. Margaret Mary Alacoque:*

When you are in trouble and anxious, go and plunge yourself in the peace of this adorable Heart, which no one can take from you.

As regards your taking up your abode in His Sacred Heart, why should you fear? Our Lord Himself invites you to come to Him and take your rest in His Heart. Is It not the throne of mercy, where the most miserable are the most favorably received, provided that, although steeped in misery, they are drawn by love?



*Image on the front of prayer card used by St. Louis Visitation Academy for those enrolled in the Arch-confraternity of Reparation to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Members share daily prayers and good works along with the Sisters of the Visitation and attend Mass on First Fridays.*



8

*Tepid souls shall become fervent.*

*Prayerful Personal Reflection:*

Although the world often calls us to be neutral and to follow the moderate path, when we read this promise, we might consider the call to a greater commitment to our faith. Consider this: Does one luxuriate in a tepid bath? Is one comforted by a lukewarm cup of tea? The answer is clearly no. Similarly, a moderate commitment to friendship does not inspire devotion or warm our hearts. The same is true of faith. A moderate faith does not ignite action or devotion. Perhaps we could ask ourselves, how alive is a faith that is neutral? Devotion to prayer before the Blessed Sacrament will light the fire of our faith.

*From Scripture:*

I know your works; I know that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. (Revelation 3: 15-16)

*From St. Francis de Sales:*

Let us belong wholly to God, even amid the tumult and worries involved in the diversity of human affairs. What better proof can we give of our fidelity than perseverance amid such contradictions? Alas! Solitude has its great trials as the world has its worries and disorder. Nevertheless, we must be of good cheer no matter where we are, remembering that God's help is always accessible to those who trust him.

*From St. Margaret Mary Alacoque:*

I advise you to have recourse to the Sacred Heart of Our Lord Jesus Christ if you want to conquer your enemies and obtain the strength and consolation you need. He will not refuse you this help if you ask it of him.



*Statue of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, Mendota Heights, MN Visitation School*



9

*Fervent souls shall rise speedily to great perfection.*

*Prayerful Personal Reflection:*

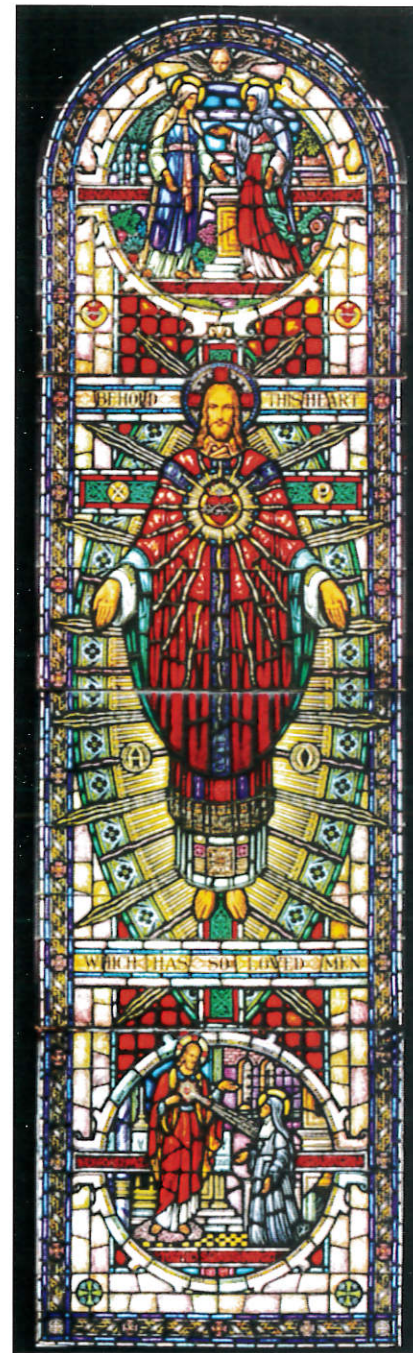
When water boils, it releases steam that rises and seems to disappear into the air. In reality, it becomes a part of the atmosphere. Perhaps we might think of our devotion, our passionate love of God, in gratitude, patience, humility, and all of the other little virtues as the way we will rise and become one with our Creator. This union of love where the lover can not be distinguished from the beloved may be perceived as perfection. C.S. Lewis wrote about innate human desire to experience joy. He suggested that moments when our heart and soul feel that interior sense of joy are actually small glimpses of perfect union of love between the Creator and creation. Although we cannot attain such perfection in this life, our hearts should fervently desire to pursue it always. How eager are we to know and love our Lord? Do we seek to be awake to the beauty and goodness around us and to bring it to those we meet? A fervent desire to love God and to love our neighbor begins by seeking to hear, to see and to know God in those He loves.

*From Scripture:*

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as children through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. (Ephesians 1:3-6)

*From St. Francis de Sales:*

Consider Jacob's ladder, for it is the true picture of the devout life. The two sides between which we climb upward and to which the rungs are



fastened represent prayer which asks for and receives the love of God and the sacraments which give it. The rungs are the various degrees of charity by which we move from virtue to virtue, either coming down by action to help and support our neighbor or going up by contemplation to loving union with God.

*From St. Margaret Mary Alacoque:*

What have I in heaven, and what do I desire on earth but Thee alone, O my God. O Heart of love, I put all my confidence in You, (for I fear everything from my own wickedness and frailty)...I hope for all things from your goodness and bounty. (from the Prayer of Consecration to the Sacred Heart)

*Stained glass window in the Heart of the Visitation School main entrance in Mendota Heights, MN; Top panel—Visitation of Mary and Elizabeth; Middle panel—Sacred Heart of Jesus; Lower panel—St. Margaret Mary's vision of the Sacred Heart.*



10

*I will give to priests the power of touching the hardest hearts.*

***Prayerful Personal Reflection:***

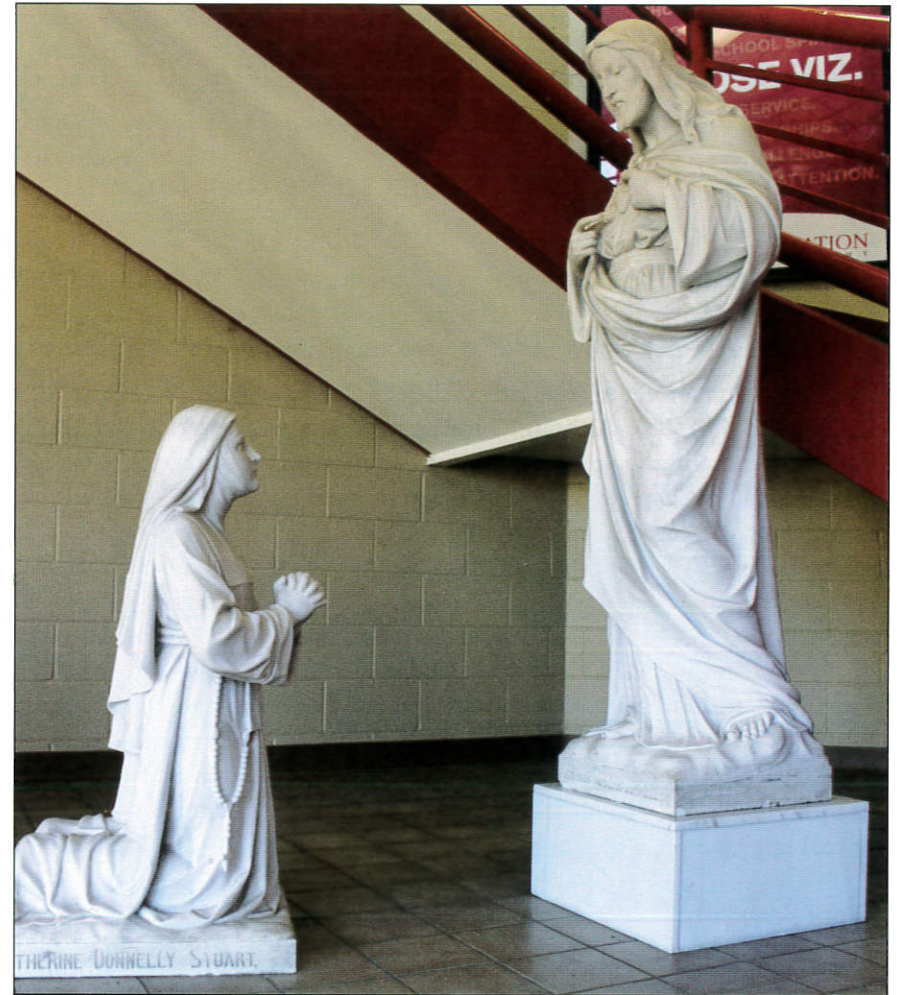
How often do we pray for our priests, whose vocation it is to care for the flock of Jesus? Do we aid them in our actions and in our prayer or do we harden our hearts in judgment against the manner in which they preach? At the Last Supper, Jesus said, "Do this in memory of me" and called upon His Disciples to go out and spread the Good News of our Salvation. Our priests, the modern day Apostles of Christ, have special blessings from Jesus to touch our hardened hearts in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Let us pray for the softening of hearts through the sacraments and through the intercession of our priests. Once made malleable, our hearts may then beat in rhythm with the Heart of Jesus.

***From Scripture:***

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: Oh, that today you would hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the day of testing in the desert, where your ancestors tested and tried me and saw my works for forty years.... Encourage yourselves daily while it is still today so that none of you may grow hardened by the deceit of sin. We have become partners of Christ if only we hold the beginning of the reality firm until the end. For it is said: Oh, that today you would hear his voice. (Hebrews 3: 7-16)

***From St. Francis de Sales:***

Your mouths are the channels by which peace flows from heaven to earth upon men of good will. Your voices are the trumpets of the great Jesus, destroying the walls of iniquity, the mystical Jericho. It is the highest honor for men to be raised to the destiny to which the angels themselves have not been called.



*Statues of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque in devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus;  
St. Louis Visitation Academy.*

***From St. Margaret Mary Alacoque:***

You ask me for some short prayer by which to testify your love for God. I know of and consider nothing more efficacious than this same love, for when one loves, everything speaks of love, even our most absorbing occupations can be a proof of our love. Love then – as St. Augustine says – and do what you will.



11

*Those who propagate this devotion shall have their names written in My Heart, never to be blotted out.*

*Prayerful Personal Reflection:*

A quote from Hamlet reflects this promise: "It is a hope devoutly to be wished for" (3.1.7-8). Although Shakespeare was not referring to faithful devotion, certainly the message of hope is consistent with a desire to have one's name permanently written in the heart of Jesus. To be held and remembered in a loved one's heart is indeed "a hope devoutly to be wished for." In a world that frequently asks, "What do I get out of this action?" the answer in this case is immeasurable. To be among those who are loved for all eternity, those who are remembered, "never to be blotted out" is in fact the gift of eternal life. How might we achieve this hope? The fitness and diet gurus of our age challenge us to establish new and healthier habits. Such practices, they say, will make us happier. What if we were to develop a habit of devotion to the Sacred Heart in daily prayer or monthly Adoration on First Friday? This habit may lead to eternal rewards of real happiness.

*From Scripture:*

May God do good to you and remember his covenant with his faithful servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, give to all of you a heart to worship him and to do his will wholeheartedly and with a willing spirit, open your heart to his law and commandments and grant you peace, hear your prayers and be reconciled to you, and never forsake you in time of adversity. (2 Maccabees 1: 2-5)

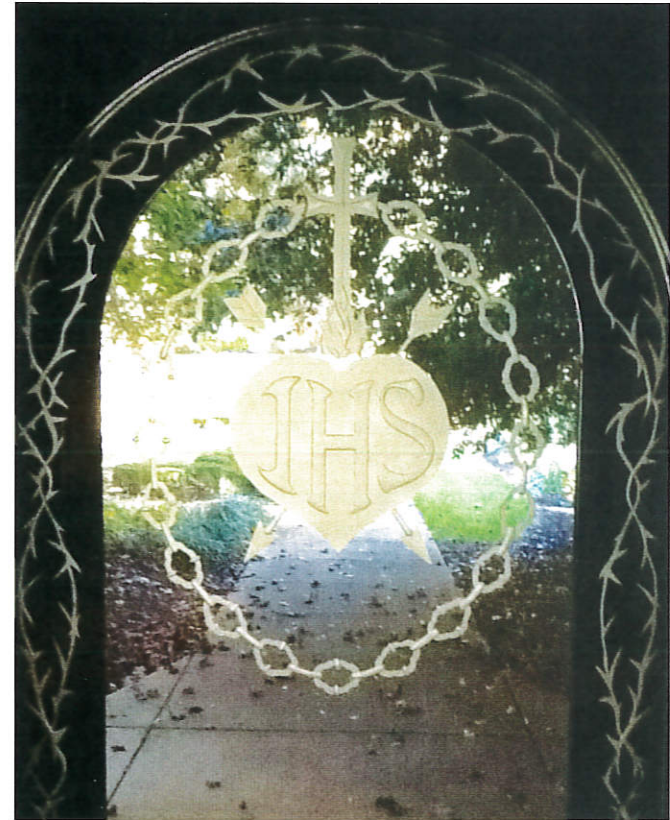
*From St. Francis de Sales:*

We must try to keep our hearts continually unshakably serene throughout the vicissitudes of life. Even though everything turns and changes around us, we must ever remain steady – always looking, striving, aspiring toward God. But whether we are sad or happy, full of sweetness or bitterness, at peace or disturbed, filled with light or darkness, troubled or

at rest, delighted or disgusted, experiencing aridity or consolation, scorched by the sun or refreshed by the dew – for all that, the fine point of our heart, our spirit, our higher will which is our compass, must ever look and tend toward the love of God, its Creator, its Savior, its sole and sovereign good.

*From St. Margaret Mary Alacoque:*

Would that I could exhaust myself in acts of thanksgiving and gratitude towards this divine Heart, for the great favor He shows us in deigning to accept our help to make Him known, loved and honored; He reserves infinite blessings for all those who devote themselves to this work.



*Emblem of the Visitation Sisters imagined by St. Francis de Sales etched on the Garden door in the crypt at Georgetown Visitation Monastery.*



12

*I promise thee in the excessive mercy of My Heart that My all powerful love will grant to all who communicate in the first Friday of the month for nine consecutive months the grace of final perseverance; they shall not die in My displeasure nor without their sacrament; My Divine Heart shall be their safe refuge.*

*Prayerful Personal Reflection:*

If we take action with a sincere heart, we hope to receive the fruit of our devotion. Do we make time each day for the Lord? Do we seek ways to demonstrate devotion to Him? St. Margaret Mary's vision offered an opportunity for us to learn devotion. Time spent before the Blessed Sacrament in Eucharistic Adoration on First Fridays is a way to allow our spirit to speak to God and more importantly perhaps, to listen with our hearts. As we sit in silence in the presence of Our Lord, we open ourselves to His call, to His voice that will satisfy a hungry heart and feed the poverty of our undernourished souls.

*From Scripture:*

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.  
(Phillipians 4: 8)

*From St. Francis de Sales:*

You must not only be devout and love devotion, but you must render it lovable to everyone. Now you will make it lovable if you render it useful and pleasing. The sick will love your devotion if they receive care and comfort from it; your family will love it if they see you more attentive to



*Sacred Heart statue in the crypt of the Georgetown Visitation Monastery*

their well-being, more gentle in handling your duties, more kind in correcting and so on; your spouse will love it seeing that as your devotion increases, you become more warm and affectionate; your relatives and friends will love it if they see you more free, supportive of others, and yielding to them in matters that are not contrary to God's will. In short, you as far as possible, make your devotion attractive.

*From St. Margaret Mary Alacoque:*

The adorable Heart of Jesus wills to establish Its reign of love in every heart, so as to overthrow that of Satan. It seems to me that He so greatly desires this that He promises great rewards to those who, with good will and in good earnest, devote themselves to it, according to the means and to the light He grants them.

## Acknowledgements

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Passages for reflection can be found in the following sources:

Scripture passages are taken from *The New American Bible*. Fireside Bible Publishers, 1987.

The “Words of St. Francis de Sales” are taken from the following sources:

*Golden Counsels of St. Francis de Sales*, edited by Mary Paula McCarthy, VHM and Mary Grace McCormack, VHM, translated by Peronne Marie Thibert, VHM.

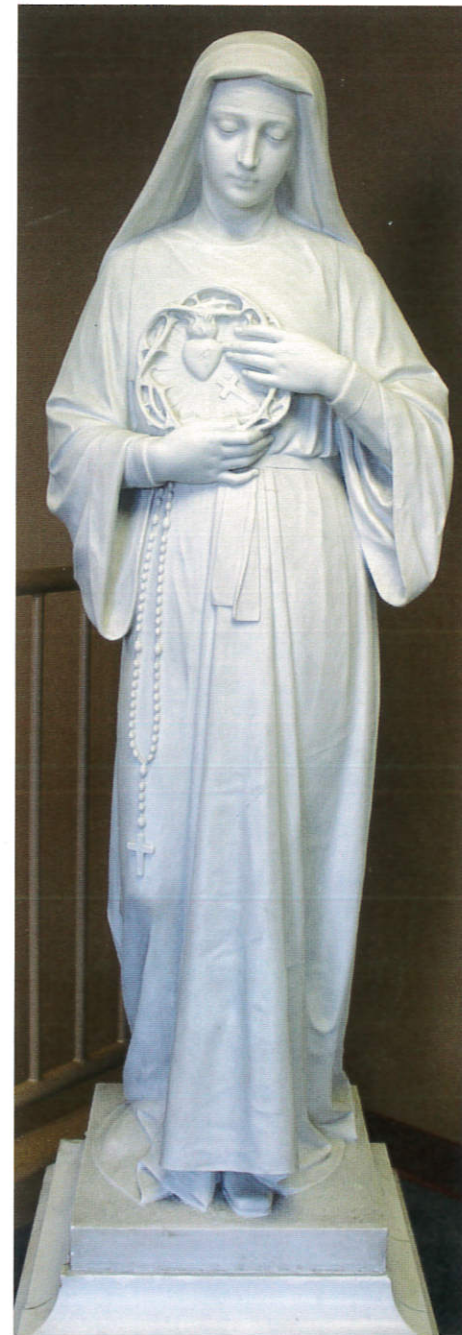
*Introduction to the Devout Life by St. Francis de Sales*, translated by Fr. Antony Mookenthotham, MSFS, Fr. Armind Nazareth, MSFS, and Fr. Antony Kolenchery, MSFS.

*Reflections from Saint Francis de Sales on Living Jesus*, compiled by Fr. Andrew V. Masters, S.V.D, edited by Gerard J. Quinlan.

*The Spirit of St. Francis de Sales*, by Jean Pierre Camus.

“The Sermons of St. Francis de Sales on Prayer;”  
[www.theworkofGod.org/library](http://www.theworkofGod.org/library).

All quotes attributed to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque are taken from *Thoughts and Sayings of Saint Margaret Mary* compiled by the Sisters of the Visitation of Paray-le-Monial. Translated by a Sister of the Visitation of Partridge Green, Horsham, West Essex.



St. Margaret Mary Statue in Visitation Academy, St. Louis, MO