



Anglican Catholic Church



Diocese of the United Kingdom

Catholic Faith † Orthodox Worship † Apostolic Order

June 2019

*My dear friends and colleagues,*

At Pentecost God gives us gifts – with strings attached: the gifts are *for the common good*. Yes, we can take pleasure in the gift. Yes, we can enjoy it. Yes, we can even feel proud we have it. Yet, at the end of the day (that great, long day that is our life) God is going to ask us to provide a reckoning. Those gifts of ours, how did we use them? For the benefit of ourselves alone? Or for the good of the larger community? So we will be judged not on the gifts we've taken to the grave, but on the gifts we've given away!



**From the Archdeacon's desk**

The Lord has given us everything we have, and everything we are. Stand on a hilltop and look around. Everything, as far as the eye can see, is God's gift. You can take a little piece of that creation, stick a sign on it and say, "It's mine," but it's not. You can pretend it's yours, but really, it belongs to God. It always has. It always will. It all belongs to God.

God's gifts, you see, always and forever have strings attached, but they are the sort of strings that connect us to one another, in community – and to God.

All this is the work of the Holy Ghost. We call these things "gifts of the Holy Spirit", which means we can never open such a gift without being changed within.

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Mary Magdalene, whose feast day is on 22 July is mentioned in the Gospels as being among the women of Galilee who followed Jesus and His disciples, and who was present at His Crucifixion and Burial, and who went to the tomb on Easter morning to anoint His body. She was the first to see the Risen Lord, and to announce His Resurrection to the apostles. Accordingly, she is referred to in early Christian writings as "the apostle to the apostles".

Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany (the sister of Martha and Lazarus), and the unnamed penitent woman who anointed Jesus' feet are often considered to be the same woman. From this, plus the statement that Jesus had cast seven demons out of Mary, has come the tradition that she had been a person of dubious character before she met Jesus.

Because of the assumption that she had been a spectacular sinner, and also perhaps because she is described as weeping at Jesus' tomb on the Resurrection morning, she is often portrayed in art with eyes red from crying. From this appearance we derive the English word "maudlin", meaning "tearfully sentimental". There is a Magdalen College at Oxford, and a Magdalene College at Cambridge (different spelling), both normally pronounced "Maudlin". Her story certainly gives us all hope.

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## The Sacred Heart

June is the month particularly dedicated to devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Feast this year, because of the lateness of Easter, being on 28th, and it's a worthwhile exercise for us to reflect on the importance of this profound scriptural image which conveys so much of what God does for us in the life and mission of His Son.

The popular image as we have it now is the interpretation of visions of the Sacred Heart which were revealed to S. Margaret Mary Alacoque at Paray-le-Monial in 1673–4, which inspired the great flourishing of devotion to the Heart of Jesus in modern times. But Christian theology is not built on the visions of individuals, however much the Church may choose to endorse their experience as beneficial, and it is in the Scriptures that we find the sign of Christ's divine Heart taught and unfolded.

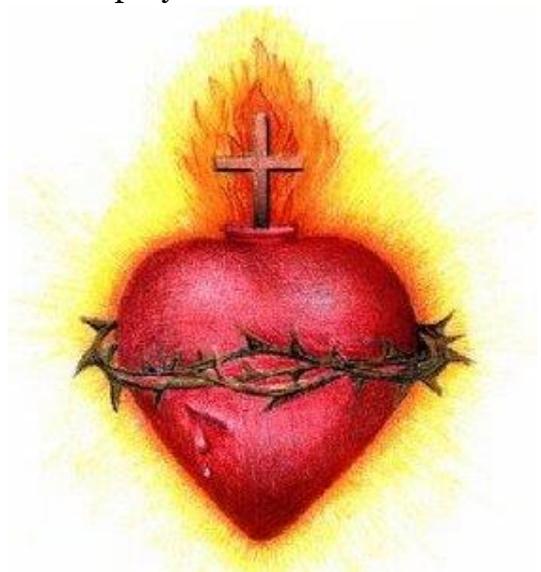
When I was a child the only thing I knew about the Sacred Heart was that the local Roman Catholic church had a very large statue which displayed it. Otherwise, this feast day which we commemorate this month, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, had absolutely no meaning to me. My experience probably parallels that of many people, especially those of us who grew up in other church traditions. This Feast Day of the Sacred Heart has only come to have real meaning for me personally within the last perhaps twenty years or so.

For many people this image of the Sacred Heart serves as a powerful symbol of Christ's being with the poor – being with us when we are poor or when we feel poorly: in the most simple and profound of ways – this image of Jesus' sharing his broken heart with our own. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is a visual and verbal symbol of how Christ is with us and with others in suffering: Christ's sacred, passionate, wounded, encompassing heart, broken open for our own broken hearts and the broken hearts of the world.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus can be traced back to the Middle Ages. The devotion seems to have sprung from the veneration of the Wound in the Side. It was for a long time confined to a relatively small number of mystics and saints, the most familiar to us being Mother Julian of Norwich. By the 16th century the devotion extended from the visions of the mystics to the regular practice of many in religious orders who were drawn to the ascetic life, especially the Carthusians and later the Jesuits, and then to the Church at large. The commemoration of the Sacred Heart came to be a Solemn Feast in the Roman Catholic Church, but that happened as recently as 1969.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola has left us with a wonderful devotional prayer – the Anima Christi:

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.  
Body of Christ, save me.  
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.  
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.  
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.  
O good Jesus, hear me;  
Within thy wounds hide me;  
Suffer me not to be separated from thee;  
From the malignant enemy defend me;  
In the hour of my death call me,  
And bid me come to thee,  
That with thy saints I may praise thee  
For ever and ever. Amen.



*(At the risk of self-indulgence I will often use as a “desk picture” some Isle of Sheppey scenes photographed from my desk, from the garden, or within a few minutes of it!)*