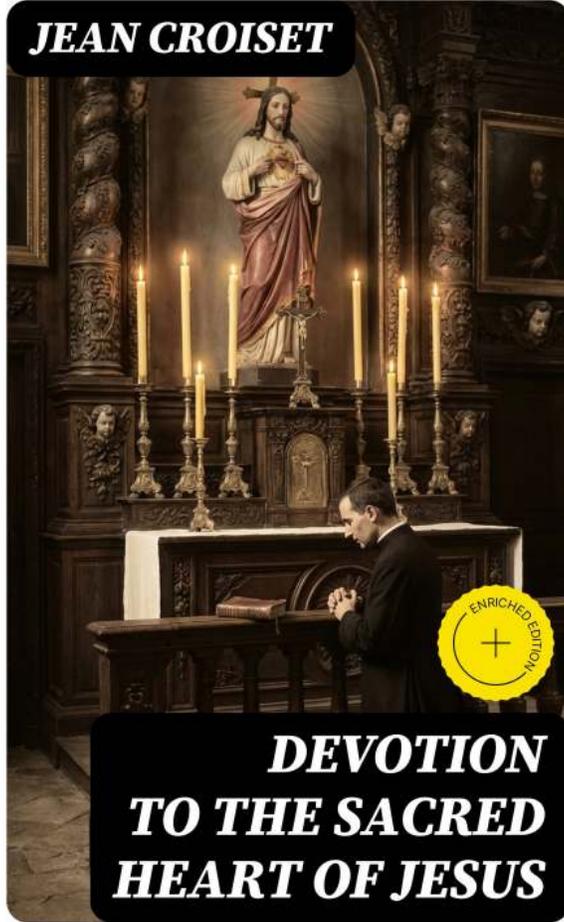


JEAN CROISET



***DEVOTION
TO THE SACRED
HEART OF JESUS***

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**DEVOTION
TO THE SACRED
HEART OF JESUS**

Jean Croiset

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Lily Wharton

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Introduction

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This classic of Catholic spirituality draws readers into the paradox of a Heart that is at once infinite love and wounded vulnerability, calling for a freely given response that unites tender affection with steadfast fidelity, interior prayer with outward works, and personal conversion with communal repair, so that the believer learns to meet a God who seeks not distant homage but intimate reciprocity, and to discover in the contemplation of Christ's Heart the surprising path by which divine mercy confronts human coldness, tempers zeal with humility, and turns ordinary life into a continual offering.

Jean Croiset, a French Jesuit priest and spiritual writer, composed *Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus* as a devotional manual in late seventeenth-century France, when renewed attention to the person of Christ shaped prayer, preaching, and lay piety. Emerging within the Jesuit tradition of practical guidance for the interior life, the book gathers theological motives, scriptural foundations, and concrete practices into an orderly path meant for ordinary Christians as well as clergy and religious. Its historical horizon is the flourishing of Sacred Heart devotion that followed reports of fervent prayer at Paray-le-Monial, a current that quickly spread through congregations and households.

Readers encounter not a narrative but a method: Croiset argues patiently for the legitimacy of honoring Christ under the sign of his Heart, proposes dispositions by which the

soul may respond, and arranges meditations and exercises to sustain constancy. His voice is pastoral, courteous, and firm, shaped by Jesuit clarity and a teacher's instinct for repetition that consolidates habits. The style favors concise reasoning rather than ornate flights, yet it carries a warm urgency that invites trust. The tone remains reverent and practical, balancing affective devotion with moral seriousness, so the book can be read slowly as a companion to daily prayer.

At the heart of the work stands a theology of love: the Heart of Jesus signifies the person of Christ loving the world to the end and inviting a reciprocal love that touches conduct, relationships, and worship. Croiset explores gratitude for redemption, reparation for indifference and injury, and conformity of one's will to the gentle strength of the Savior. He links interior affection with outward acts of charity and perseverance, and he keeps the Eucharist and the Passion before the reader as privileged places where divine tenderness is most tangible. The result is an ethic of adoration that becomes service and solidarity.

Contemporary readers may find in these pages a bracing antidote to distraction and cynicism. By uniting feeling and doctrine, Croiset offers a school of attention in which compassion is not sentimentality but steadfast friendship with Christ that flows into mercy for others. The book's rhythm of prayer, examination, and concrete acts equips people facing burnout, conflict, or loneliness with practices that anchor identity without hardening the heart. In workplaces, homes, and parishes, its insistence on patient reparation challenges indifference and invites restorative

gestures, while its focus on the person of Jesus grounds activism and contemplation in a single, integrated fidelity.

Part of the book's lasting strength is pedagogical. Croiset begins from widely shared Christian convictions and proceeds step by step, distinguishing the essence of the devotion from passing fashions and warning against mechanical formalism. He honors freedom of conscience, proposes rather than coerces, and returns repeatedly to motives that purify intention: gratitude, confidence, and perseverance. The imagery is concrete, but the argument is carefully reasoned; the exercises are adaptable, whether one is a novice to prayer or long seasoned in it. In this sober balance of feeling and rule, the manual models a humane, sustainable way of growing in holiness.

To approach Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, then, is to accept an invitation into a disciplined tenderness that appeals to the whole person and seeks a lasting conversion of habits. Croiset does not promise ease; he promises companionship and a reliable structure by which divine generosity can reshape ordinary time. Read slowly, with attention to its steady cadence, the book offers a gentle resolution to its opening paradox: a God who desires intimate friendship without compulsion, and a human heart that becomes most free when it loves steadfastly. Its message remains timely because love still asks to be learned.

Synopsis

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Jean Croiset, a French Jesuit, composed *Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus* in the late seventeenth century, originally in French, as a systematic guide to a rapidly spreading form of Catholic piety. Writing for both clergy and lay readers, he sets out to define the devotion, ground it theologically, and provide a prudent method for practicing it. The opening chapters establish purpose and scope: to explain what is meant by honoring the Heart of Jesus, why such honor is fitting, and how it should transform Christian discipleship. Croiset insists that doctrine and practice advance together, so sound motives accompany concrete acts of reverence.

Croiset begins by clarifying the object of the devotion: not a part isolated from Christ, but the Heart as the living sign of his person and love. He develops this through biblical scenes, especially the pierced side, and through patristic and liturgical echoes that contemplate divine charity made visible in the Incarnate Word. The devotion, he argues, draws believers to meditate on the interior dispositions of Jesus—his mercy, meekness, and zeal—and to respond with gratitude. By situating symbols within Christology, he aims to avoid misunderstandings, presenting the Sacred Heart as a pathway to deeper knowledge of Christ rather than a novel sentiment.

He then presents motives that should animate this devotion. Chief among them are gratitude for Christ's

boundless love, reparation for human indifference toward that love, and the desire to conform one's heart to his. Croiset describes these motives as mutually reinforcing: the contemplation of charity received leads to sorrow for negligence, which in turn inspires concrete acts of amendment and service. The devotion thus aims beyond feelings to moral and sacramental renewal, encouraging steadfastness in prayer, fidelity to duties of state, and fraternal charity. In this way, honoring the Heart of Jesus becomes a school for holiness rather than a passing enthusiasm.

From principles he turns to method, outlining practices that embody the devotion in daily life. Croiset recommends regular meditation on the Passion and the love of Christ, frequent and fervent participation in the Eucharist, and deliberate acts of reparation offered with humility. He proposes set times of prayer and brief aspirations throughout the day, alongside gestures of mercy toward others as exterior fruits. For households and communities, he suggests ordered patterns that unite common prayer with personal commitment, always adapted to circumstances and Church guidance. These practices, he stresses, are means to interior transformation, not ends to be pursued for their own sake.

Equally important are the dispositions with which the devotion is undertaken. Croiset counsels purity of intention, patience in spiritual growth, and submission to ecclesial authority, warning against restlessness, vanity, and rigidity. He provides practical advice for confessors and spiritual guides who must adapt recommendations to the state of

each soul, whether in religious life or in secular occupations. He treats common pitfalls—scruples, discouragement, and the temptation to measure progress by sensible consolations—and urges perseverance grounded in faith. Throughout, he balances zeal with prudence, insisting that authentic love of the Heart of Jesus manifests in obedience, charity, and the steady fulfillment of ordinary duties.

Anticipating questions, Croiset addresses objections that the devotion is novel, overly affective, or in danger of eclipsing the wholeness of Christ. He answers by showing its continuity with Scripture and tradition, its Christocentric focus, and its ethical demands that counter mere sentiment. He delineates criteria for discernment: practices should lead to greater love of God and neighbor, respect liturgical norms, and foster humility. By clarifying ends and means, he also situates the devotion alongside others within the Church rather than in competition with them. The result is a measured apology that invites examination without coercion and favors mature, ecclesial devotion.

Composed at a time when the Sacred Heart was gaining prominence through the witness of the Visitation tradition and St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, Croiset's treatise helped establish a clear, pastorally grounded account of the devotion. Its lasting value lies in uniting contemplation of Christ's love with concrete reform of life, proposing practices accessible to diverse states while preserving theological depth. Without relying on sensational claims, it offers a stable framework that has informed subsequent spiritual literature and communal prayer. Readers encounter not a set of esoteric techniques, but a sustained call to

gratitude, reparation, and charity that continues to animate Christian discipleship.

Historical Context

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Jean Croiset (1656–1738), a French Jesuit, composed *Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus* in the closing years of Louis XIV's reign. The work emerged within the Catholic Reformation's maturing phase, when the Society of Jesus, new seminaries, and reformed religious orders shaped pastoral life. Paray-le-Monial in Burgundy, home to a Visitation convent founded under the spirit of Francis de Sales and Jane Frances de Chantal, had become an influential center of affective piety. Jesuit houses in cities like Lyon fostered spiritual writing and directed women's communities. Croiset wrote amid this network of institutions, clerical reform, and devotional publishing.

The immediate matrix for Croiset's subject was the devotion associated with Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647–1690), a Visitation nun at Paray-le-Monial. Between 1673 and 1675 she reported interior experiences that focused attention on the heart of Christ, guided pastorally by the Jesuit Claude La Colombière (1641–1682). Through Jesuit correspondence and the Visitation network, accounts of this piety circulated across France. After Alacoque's death in 1690, her community and Jesuit allies sought to articulate the practice clearly for clergy and laity. Croiset, a Jesuit spiritual director connected with the Visitation, drew on these testimonies and the broader Salesian-Jesuit tradition to present the devotion.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was first published in 1691, shortly after Alacoque's death, as a systematic presentation of the emerging cult. France's established printing centers, notably Paris and Lyon, enabled quick dissemination through clergy, convents, and urban booksellers. Jesuit colleges and missions used such manuals to shape popular piety, while the Visitation Order transmitted practices through their monasteries and pupils. The book addressed parish priests and lay confraternities seeking structured guidance. Its plain, practical style reflected the era's catechetical priorities, offering a coherent rationale for a devotion already spreading through letters, sermons, and authorized images in Catholic households.

The book appeared within a Gallican climate shaped by the 1682 Declaration of the Clergy of France, which asserted limits on papal authority and strengthened royal oversight of church life. Louis XIV's regime, especially after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685), promoted a visibly Catholic society while managing devotions through episcopal structures. New practices therefore required persuasive theological framing and prudent appeal to tradition. By anchoring the Sacred Heart in Scripture and long-standing affective spirituality, Croiset addressed concerns about innovation in a church keen to balance national autonomy, episcopal discipline, and fidelity to Rome amid ongoing debates over jurisdiction and doctrine.

Controversy over Jansenism formed the other major backdrop. The movement, influential among some French clergy and laity, stressed divine predestination and rigorous

morality, and it disputed Jesuit casuistry. Key papal condemnations, including *Cum occasione* (1653) and *Ad sanctam beati Petri sedem* (1656), had not silenced disputes, which continued into the early eighteenth century. Devotional innovations were often judged through this polemical lens. Croiset's exposition, consonant with Jesuit pastoral emphases and Salesian gentleness, offered an affective Christology against rigorist currents without departing from approved doctrine. His careful appeals to patristic and medieval precedents positioned the devotion as continuity rather than novelty.

When Croiset wrote, no universal liturgical feast of the Sacred Heart existed, and episcopal opinion varied. The devotion spread through private practice, pastoral manuals, and local permissions, while formal recognition advanced slowly. In 1765, Pope Clement XIII approved a Mass and Office of the Sacred Heart for certain places and religious institutes, marking a significant institutional milestone. Only in 1856 did Pope Pius IX extend the feast to the universal Latin Church. This chronology underscores the late-seventeenth-century setting of the book: it addressed clergy and faithful navigating a developing, but not yet universally sanctioned, expression of Catholic affective piety.

Seventeenth-century French society, especially after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, pursued confessional uniformity. Parish reform, catechesis, and lay confraternities were central tools, supported by printing and image circulation. The emblem of the heart of Christ, crowned with thorns and surmounted by a cross, became recognizable in homes, chapels, and small devotional books. Jesuit missions

and retreat houses promoted examination of conscience and frequent communion within orthodox bounds set by bishops. In this environment, Croiset's manual furnished clergy with language to direct fervor toward approved practices, reinforcing a Catholic identity shaped by sacramental life, obedience, and affective attachment to Christ.

The book's long reception spanned upheavals that postdated its composition: the bull *Unigenitus* (1713), the suppression of the Society of Jesus by Clement XIV (1773), the French Revolution's closures of monasteries, and nineteenth-century restorations. The devotion endured these shifts, receiving wider liturgical approval in 1765 and universal status in 1856, and inspiring public monuments such as the Basilica of the Sacré-Cœur at Montmartre, begun in 1875. Croiset's synthesis thus reflects his era's pastoral aims—ordered, Scripture-anchored affectivity within church discipline—while implicitly critiquing factional rigor by emphasizing Christ's merciful love. It provided a stable template that outlasted political turns and institutional reconfigurations.

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**It has been suggested that this work
be split into multiple pages.**

If you'd like to help, please review the style guidelines and help pages.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

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BY FATHER JOHN CROISET[1], Of the Society of Jesus[2].
TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN. LONDON: BURNS &
LAMBERT, 17 & 18, PORTMAN STREET, PORTMAN SQUARE.
1863.

IMPRIMATUR[3], Westmon., die 82 Maji. 1863. N. CARD.
WISEMAN[4].

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

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THE deep and extraordinary interest taken by so many, in the devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, the great fruits it has produced, and the singular esteem entertained for it, by persons of universally recognized merit, have led to the publication of this book. It is intended to instruct the faithful, and satisfy their pious desires[1q]. There might, perhaps, have been some reason to fear, at the very outset, that the mere title of Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ, however it might attract many persons to read this book, might also deter many others. Arrested by the first words, they might be led to form an inaccurate idea of the devotion. To remove this difficulty, it has been thought well to explain in the beginning, what is

understood by devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. Experience has proved, that there is no one, who, after seeing in what it consists, does not agree, that it is reasonable, solid, and most useful, for our salvation, as well as for our perfection.

In the first part, are developed the motives, which should attract us to this devotion. In the second, are given the means of acquiring it. In the third, the practice of the Devotion is explained, and some of the exercises supplied, which are suited to it. And since the Devotion may be wholly reduced, to the perfect love of Jesus Christ, especially in the Adorable Eucharist; this perfect love is treated of, throughout the whole course of the work. The reason why the visit to the Blessed Sacrament, the august Sacrifice of our Altars, and Holy Communion, are spoken of at greater length, is, because, of all exercises of piety, there are none which bring us nearer to Jesus Christ, none more adapted to honour His Sacred Heart, and to inflame ours with an ardent love of Him.

It is hoped that the reflections here made, will help to convince many, of the reasons for practising these holy exercises, and teach them at the same time how to practise them with fruit. A portrait is then drawn of a soul that truly loves Jesus Christ, with a view of giving a true idea of real and solid piety.

The method of practising this Devotion is then given, by means of suitable exercises; and the work is closed by Meditations adapted to the Devotion. Those who know the singular merit and exalted virtue of Father La Colombière^[5], and are aware that Almighty God especially

selected him, to promote the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, will be glad to find in various parts of this book, the thoughts and sentiments of this great servant of Jesus Christ upon this Devotion.

To lead Christians to the practice of this Devotion, it is unnecessary to adduce either authorities, revelations, or examples. It is enough to know, that it tends wholly to the perfect love of Jesus Christ. It has been thought well, however, to cite, in two or three parts of this book, such things as are found in the revelations of St. Gertrude[8] and St. Mechtildis[9], bearing upon this Devotion. It would be nothing short of prevarication, were we to abstain, through fear of being considered too credulous, from pointing out the wonderful means, which Almighty God has made use of latterly, to renew the practice of this Devotion amongst the faithful. It cannot be denied, without condemning the sentiments of the entire Church, that there have existed at all times, pure and chosen souls, to whom God communicates Himself intimately. Although indeed, instances of this divine condescension and familiarity are most rare, nevertheless, there is not a century that does not furnish us with examples of it in some Saint. Those who have never received such favours, says St. Teresa, have sometimes a difficulty in believing in these extraordinary gifts: (St. Teresa in her Life, ch. 26.) But they should remember, that if, it be credulity to believe everything on such a subject, it is on the other hand, temerity to believe nothing. It is well here to state, that the revelations of St. Gertrude and of St Mechtildis, which we have quoted two or three times in this book, were examined by all the learned

persons, who were then in Flanders, in France, in Italy, in Germany, and in the most celebrated universities. All were unanimous in asserting that they were full of the spirit of God, and that He alone was the author of them. Learned Prelates and great Saints have esteemed and approved them. They have been cited with praise by celebrated Doctors. One of them has asserted, that, after the examination which has been made of them, he did not think, that a man of true wisdom and solid virtue, could fail to esteem them.*

The Spiritual Retreat of F. La Colombière has already made many pious souls acquainted, with the wonderful means, which Almighty God has employed, to inspire this Devotion. But, the person of whom that great servant of God speaks, "to whom" he says, "our Lord, communicates Himself most intimately," took always especial care to lead an obscure and hidden life, though honoured by God with those extraordinary graces, which we read of with admiration, in the lives of the greatest saints. We therefore exhort our readers to read the life of Sister Margaret Alacoque[6], Religious of the Visitation, by Monseigneur Languet, Bishop of Soissons[7], one of the greatest and most learned Prelates, that France has produced in these times. It was translated into Italian and printed at Venice. It will be seen in the person of that most virtuous virgin, that the arm of the Lord is not shortened, and that, even if it were true that the present age is (as some not very devout minds wish to persuade themselves) an age of no miracles, at all events there is not any age of the Church, in which great Saints do not appear.

*Revelationes pcedictis Fceminis factce toti Orbi innotuerunt, et a piis, eruditisque vins jam olim fuerunt approbatas; nam, et Sancti Patres passim eas citant in scriptis et libris suis Revelationes sanctos Gertrudis ante et post mortem ipsius fuerunt a doctissimis, eruditissimisque viris summa cum diligentia examinatce, quorum unus post accuratam illarum lectionem, scripsit sententiam hoc modo: Ego, inquit, in veritate divini luminis sentio, neminem qui Dei Spiritu sit illustratus, posse calumniari, aut impugnare ea qua in hoc libra habentur, nam et Catholica sunt, et Sancta. Bias. Concl. Anim.fidel. C. 4. § 5. de Authent. Revelation.

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For the greater convenience of those who may use this book, it has been thought well to place all the Meditations at the end. Some ejaculatory prayers are appended to them. They may be employed to feed devotion during the day, according to the different necessities of different persons. They are taken from the Soliloquies, the Meditations, and the Manual of St. Augustin, and also from the works of St. Teresa.

FIRST PART.

MOTIVES. CHAPTER I. What is meant by Devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in what it consists.

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THE particular object of this devotion is the immense love of the Son of God, which has induced Him to die for us, and to give Himself wholly to us in the Adorable Sacrament of the Altar[14], and this, although He foresaw all the ingratitude and outrages which He was to meet with in this state of a victim immolated till the end of ages; preferring rather to expose himself daily to the insults and contempt of mankind, than to fail in showing us, by the greatest of all wonders, to what an excess He loves us. This is what has enkindled the piety and zeal of many. Reflecting on the little gratitude that is shown for such an excess of love, the little love that is felt for Jesus Christ, and the little value that is set upon His love for us, they have been unable to endure to see Him daily so ill-treated, without protesting to Him their just grief and their excessive desire to repair, as far as they can, so much ingratitude and contempt, by their ardent love, by their profound respect, and by every sort of homage in their power. It is with this intention that certain days in the year have been chosen in order to make a more special recognition of the excessive love of Jesus Christ for us in the adorable Sacrament; and at the same time, to make Him some reparation of honour for all the indignities and all the contempt which He has received, and still

8 Gertrude the Great (c.1256–1302) was a medieval German Benedictine mystic and saint whose visionary writings about Christ's love were widely read in later devotional literature.

9 A medieval mystic often called Mechthild (variously Mechthild of Magdeburg or Mechthild of Helfta); her visionary revelations about Christ and the Sacred Heart were influential in devotional tradition (active roughly in the 12th–13th centuries, sources differ).

10 Pope Clement X (pontificate 1670–1676); the text cites a papal bull he issued (dated 4 October 1674) that granted indulgences connected with a devotion mentioned here.

11 Pope Innocent XII (pontificate 1691–1700); the book states he granted a special papal brief that conferred a plenary indulgence in favour of the devotion to the Sacred Heart.

12 Pope Clement XIII (pontificate 1758–1769); the footnote notes that, during his reign, the Pope allowed the Sacred Heart feast to be celebrated with a proper Mass and Office in many dioceses.

13 A liturgical octave is an eight-day extension of a feast; the 'Octave of Corpus Christi' refers to the eight-day period associated with the feast honouring the Eucharist in Catholic liturgical practice.

14 A devotional phrase for the Eucharist, meaning the consecrated bread and wine in Catholic belief regarded as the Body and Blood of Christ and the central sacrament of the Mass.

15 Here refers to the French colonial settlement (now Quebec City and the surrounding region in Canada) where the Sacred Heart devotion had been established and propagated by missionaries.

16 The 16th-century ecumenical council of the Catholic Church (1545–1563) that defined key doctrines; the citation (sess. xxii, chap. 2) concerns the Catholic teaching on the Mass and its sacrificial nature.

17 St. Augustin is an anglicized spelling of St. Augustine of Hippo (c. 354–430), an influential early Christian theologian and bishop whose writings shaped Western Christianity.

18 Latin phrase meaning roughly “Give me a lover and he will feel what I say,” used here to indicate that a truly loving, humble soul will understand the spiritual realities the author describes.

19 Refers to Father Claude La Colombière (1641–1682), a Jesuit priest known for spiritual direction and writings, later canonized; he is frequently quoted in 17th–18th century devotional literature.

20 A devotional work or set of notes recording spiritual exercises and consolations; in this text it refers to writings of Fr. la Colombière used as a record of his sentiments and graces.

21 A Catholic devotion centered on the Heart of Jesus as the symbol of his divine love and mercy; it inspired specific prayers, feasts, and artistic imagery from the early modern period onward.

22 A term in Catholic usage for the Eucharist when consecrated (the Body and Blood of Christ), especially when

reserved for adoration in a church tabernacle.

23 The sacrament of the Eucharist in which Catholics receive the consecrated bread and wine (the Body and Blood of Christ) as spiritual nourishment and union with Christ.

24 Latin sentence translated as “The sacrament of the altar is the love of loves,” here quoted and attributed to St. Bernard to praise the Eucharist as the supreme expression and source of divine love.

25 Latin for “compel them to enter,” a phrase drawn from the Gospel parable of the great banquet (cf. Luke 14:23) used to urge people to accept the invitation to God’s banquet.

26 François de Sales (1567–1622), Bishop of Geneva and a major Catholic spiritual writer, author of *Introduction to the Devout Life* and a key figure in post-Reformation pastoral spirituality.

27 Abbreviated reference to St. Francis de Sales’ book *Introduction to the Devout Life* (first published 1609), a widely read manual of lay spirituality and practical piety.

28 St. Catherine of Siena (1347–1380), Italian mystic, tertiary of the Dominican Order, and Doctor of the Church, known for intense mystical experiences and influential letters to church and secular leaders.

29 The title refers to the senior Catholic prelate of Malines (Mechelen), a historic episcopal see in what is now Belgium; ‘Malines’ is the French name for Mechelen.

30 Pope Innocent XII (r. 1691–1700), head of the Roman Catholic Church during the late 17th century; here he is said to have praised an archbishop’s pastoral letter.

31 Charles Borromeo (1538–1584), Cardinal and Archbishop of Milan, a leading reformer of the Catholic Counter-Reformation noted for seminary reform and pastoral zeal.

32 A Jesuit saint (Aloysius/Gonzaga, 1568–1591) venerated for his youth, chastity, and devotion; he is often invoked as a model for interior devotion and purity of heart.

33 A devotional phrase used historically for the Eucharist or Blessed Sacrament, emphasizing reverence for Christ's presence in the consecrated species.

34 A specific day recommended in this text for making a public Act of Reparation and devotion to the Sacred Heart; it falls on the Friday immediately following the Octave of Corpus Christi.

35 A devotional prayer or set of prayers intended to make amends (spiritual reparation) for sins, irreverences, or sacrileges committed against Christ, especially in the Eucharist.

36 A formal prayer or resolution by which a person offers or dedicates themselves (their heart, life, or actions) to the Sacred Heart of Jesus; in this text it is explicitly distinguished from a canonical vow.

37 Refers to St. Aloysius Gonzaga (1568–1591), an Italian Jesuit saint noted for youthful sanctity; the text recalls his practice of reciting three Hail Marys before bed and entrusting himself to the Blessed Virgin's protection.

38 A Latin biblical phrase meaning “Behold, I am with you until the end of the age,” used here to stress Christ's promised continual presence (cf. Matthew 28:20).