

Bible Study on the Sacred Heart

Adult version

A Summer of Purpose and Action

When we watch the news or look at the state of our communities, it is glaringly obvious that our country is hurting right now. We are surrounded by deep division, exhaustion, and isolation. As the United States prepares to celebrate its 250th birthday, the bishops aren't just asking us to observe a historic milestone—they are asking us to actively lead the charge in healing our nation by consecrating it to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Why dedicate six weeks of your summer to studying the Sacred Heart? Because it is the ultimate blueprint for transforming our society. Jesus' heart is completely focused on showing radical mercy, fighting for truth, and loving the marginalized. We aren't just called to sit in quiet prayer about it; the Church is challenging us to step up with tangible action, including "250 Works of Mercy and 250 Hours of Adoration."

By diving into this study this summer, you will discover how to bring the fire of Christ's love directly into your workplaces, your families, and your local communities. True freedom, justice, and systemic healing start the moment we learn to see the face of Jesus in every single person we meet.

Week 1 (Adult Version): The Wounded Heart

1. Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, we place ourselves before You today. O most holy Heart of Jesus, fountain of every blessing, I adore You, I love You, and with lively sorrow for my sins I offer You this poor heart of mine. Make me humble, patient, pure, and wholly obedient to Your will. Grant, Good Jesus, that I may live in You and for You. Protect me in the midst of danger. Comfort me in my afflictions. Give me health of body, assistance in my temporal needs, Your blessing on all that I do, and the grace of a holy death. Amen.

2. Scripture and Meditation

Scripture (John 19:31-34, 37): *"Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water... And, as another scripture says, 'They will look on the one they have pierced.'"*

Meditation: In *Dilexit Nos*, Pope Francis calls us back to the "heart" as the unifying center of the human person. He reminds us that the devotion to the Sacred Heart is not a relic of the past, but the ultimate revelation of God's enduring love. This love is physically manifested in the wounded side of Christ on the cross. St. Bonaventure reflects on this piercing, writing: "*Then it was that the gate of heaven was opened. The lance that pierced His side opened for us the rock of refuge... Draw near to this Heart, O soul, and you will find a hidden manna, a fountain of living water.*"

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC 478) teaches: "Jesus knew and loved us each and all during his life, his agony and his Passion, and gave himself up for each one of us... He has loved us all with a human heart. For this reason, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, pierced by our sins and for our salvation, 'is quite rightly considered the chief sign and symbol of that... love with which the divine Redeemer continually loves the eternal Father and all human beings.'"

This contemplation of Christ's love cannot remain isolated in personal piety. As the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (CSDC 4) emphasizes, "Love is the highest and most universal criterion of the whole of social ethics." The blood and water flowing from the Sacred Heart is the very foundation for how we are called to structure our relationships, our communities, and our society—moving from the pierced heart of Christ to the wounded hearts of our neighbors.

3. Lectio Divina Prayer Prompts (may also be used for journaling)

- **Read:** Slowly reread the passage from John 19. What specific word or phrase catches your attention?
- **Reflect:** Imagine yourself standing at the foot of the cross. What does it mean to you that Jesus' side remained open rather than closed?
- **Respond:** Speak to Jesus about the areas in your own heart that feel pierced or wounded. How does His open heart speak to yours?
- **Rest:** Spend three minutes in total silence, resting in the presence of the Heart of Jesus.

4. Small Group Sharing Questions

1. Pope Francis speaks of returning to our "heart." In a fast-paced, administrative, or highly structured world, what distracts you most from living from the heart?
2. How does CCC 478's assertion that Jesus loved *you specifically* with a "human heart" change how you view His sacrifice?
3. According to CSDC 4, love is the "highest criterion" of social ethics. How can a devotion to the Sacred Heart transform the way we handle conflicts, organizational decisions, or social issues in our daily lives?

5. Litany of the Sacred Heart (Group Prayer)

Leader: Lord, have mercy. *Response:* **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader: Christ, have mercy. *Response:* **Christ, have mercy.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, formed by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mother... Response: **Have mercy on us.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, burning furnace of charity... Response: **Have mercy on us.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, patient and most merciful... Response: **Have mercy on us.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, pierced with a lance... Response: **Have mercy on us.**

(Pause for spontaneous intercessions. After each: "**Heart of Jesus, we trust in You.**")

Leader: Jesus, meek and humble of heart. Response: **Make our hearts like unto Thine.**

6. Preview of Next Week

Next week, we will explore the medieval mystics who viewed the open side of Christ as a literal refuge, guided by this profound insight from St. Julian of Norwich: "*Then with a glad cheer our Lord looked unto His Side and beheld, rejoicing. With His sweet looking He led forth the understanding of His creature by the same wound into His Side within.*"

7. Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, we consecrate to Your Sacred Heart our families, our work, and our very lives. Keep us united in Your love, and let the water and blood that flowed from Your side cleanse us and strengthen us to carry Your mercy to the world. Amen.

Week 2 (Adult Version): The Mystical Refuge

1. Opening Prayer

Hail, O Sacred Heart of Jesus, living and quickening source of eternal life, infinite treasury of the Divinity, burning furnace of divine love. You are my refuge and my sanctuary. O my amiable Savior, consume my heart with that burning fire with which Yours is ever inflamed. Pour down on my soul those graces which flow from Your love, and let my heart be so united with Yours, that our wills may be one, and mine may in all things be conformed to Yours. Amen. (Prayer of St. Gertrude the Great)

2. Scripture and Meditation

Scripture (Ephesians 3:14-19): "*For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the*

Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

Meditation: In *Dilexit Nos*, Pope Francis invites us into the "depth of the heart," an interior space where the love of Christ can truly take root. Centuries before, medieval mystics viewed the physical wound of Christ's side not just as a proof of love, but as an actual, spiritual refuge. The *Ancrene Wisse*, a 13th-century guide for women living lives of prayer, urged them to hide like doves in the "clefts of the rock," which they beautifully interpreted as the open wounds of Jesus. St. Julian of Norwich expanded on this in her *Tenth Revelation*. She witnessed Christ looking at His pierced side with immense joy, leading her understanding "by the same wound into His Side within," revealing a "fair, delectable place" large enough to save all of humanity.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC 2563) affirms this deep spirituality of the heart: "The heart is the dwelling-place where I am, where I live; according to the Semitic or Biblical expression, the heart is the place 'to which I withdraw.' The heart is our hidden center, beyond the grasp of our reason and of others."

However, withdrawing into the Sacred Heart is never an escape from our earthly responsibilities. The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (CSDC 42) warns that social structures cannot be healed without inner renewal: "The inner transformation of the human person, in his being progressively conformed to Christ, is the necessary prerequisite for a real transformation of his relationships with others." We hide in the cleft of the rock to be transformed by love, so that we might emerge as instruments of that love in a fractured world.

3. Lectio Divina Prayer Prompts (may also be used for journaling)

- **Read:** Slowly reread the Ephesians text. Focus on the phrase "how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ."
- **Reflect:** What does it mean for your own heart to be the "dwelling place" where Christ lives? How does the image of hiding in the "cleft of the rock" (His wounded side) make you feel?
- **Respond:** Bring to Jesus a situation in your life where you feel exposed, exhausted, or spiritually homeless. Ask Him for permission to rest inside His Heart.
- **Rest:** Spend three minutes in silence, visualizing yourself stepping into the secure, quiet refuge of the Sacred Heart.

4. Small Group Sharing Questions

1. CCC 2563 calls the heart "our hidden center, beyond the grasp of our reason and of others." How can we cultivate this hidden center when our daily lives demand so much external productivity?
2. St. Julian of Norwich saw the wound of Christ not as a tragedy, but as a spacious, joyous place of salvation. How does this perspective shift how you view Christ's suffering, and perhaps your own?

3. The CSDC states that inner transformation is a "necessary prerequisite" for transforming our relationships with others. Where have you seen inner spiritual growth directly impact your professional, community, or family life?

5. Litany of the Sacred Heart (Group Prayer)

Leader: Lord, have mercy. *Response:* **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader: Christ, have mercy. *Response:* **Christ, have mercy.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, infinite in majesty... *Response:* **Have mercy on us.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, holy temple of God... *Response:* **Have mercy on us.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, tabernacle of the Most High... *Response:* **Have mercy on us.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, house of God and gate of heaven... *Response:* **Have mercy on us.**

(Pause for spontaneous intercessions. After each: "Heart of Jesus, we trust in You.")

Leader: Jesus, meek and humble of heart. *Response:* **Make our hearts like unto Thine.**

6. Preview of Next Week

Next week, we will explore the overwhelming mercy of the Sacred Heart, specifically looking at how Christ revealed Himself to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, who said: "*He disclosed to me the marvels of his Love and the inexplicable secrets of his Sacred Heart, which so far he had concealed from me.*"

7. Closing Prayer

O Lord Jesus Christ, to Your most Sacred Heart I confide this intention (pause for silent intentions). Look upon me, then do what Your Heart dictates. Let Your Sacred Heart decide. I count on it, I trust in it, I throw myself on Your mercy. Lord Jesus! You will not fail me. Amen.

Week 3 (Adult Version): The Merciful Heart

1. Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, I consecrate myself today anew and without reserve to Your Divine Heart. O Heart of love, I put all my trust in You. For I fear all things from my own weakness, but I hope for all things from Your goodness. Destroy in me all that can displease or resist You. Let Your pure love imprint itself so deeply upon my heart that I shall never be able to forget You or to be separated from You. Amen.
(Adapted from St. Margaret Mary Alacoque)

2. Scripture and Meditation

Scripture (Matthew 11:28-30): *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

Meditation: In *Dilexit Nos*, Pope Francis reflects on "A Heart that Loves Us," reminding us that the devotion to the Sacred Heart is fundamentally an encounter with divine mercy. While the early Church focused on the pierced side of Christ, it was in the 17th century that this devotion became intensely personal through the visions of a French nun, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. At Paray-le-Monial, Jesus revealed His heart to her—crowned with thorns, topped with a cross, and radiating fire. He spoke words that have echoed through the centuries: *"Behold this Heart which has so loved men that it has spared nothing... to testify its love for them; and in return, I receive from the greater part only ingratitude, by their irreverence and sacrilege, and by the coldness and contempt they have for me."*

This plea from Christ is not a demand for appeasement, but an invitation to reciprocate His merciful love. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC 2669) states, "The prayer of the Church venerates and honors the Heart of Jesus just as it invokes his most holy name. It adores the incarnate Word and his Heart which, out of love for men, he allowed to be pierced by our sins." We are invited to bring our weariness, our burdens, and our sins to the very Heart that was wounded by them, finding there not condemnation, but rest.

However, receiving this mercy obligates us to extend it outward. The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (CSDC 206) makes clear that mercy and charity are not merely private affairs: "Social and political charity is not exhausted in relationships between individuals but spreads into the network formed by these relationships." A society truly shaped by the Sacred Heart must be characterized by forgiveness, structural mercy, and a commitment to easing the heavy burdens of the vulnerable and exhausted around us.

3. Lectio Divina Prayer Prompts (may also be used for journaling)

- **Read:** Read Matthew 11:28-30 slowly. What does the word "rest" mean to you in this exact moment?
- **Reflect:** Jesus describes Himself as "gentle and humble in heart." How does this contrast with the ways the world, or even the workplace, demands we exert power and control?
- **Respond:** Bring your specific burdens to the Sacred Heart. Speak to Jesus about the areas where you feel "weary and burdened" by ingratitude—either your own or that of others.
- **Rest:** Spend three minutes in silence, consciously letting go of your burdens and breathing in the gentle mercy of Christ.

4. Small Group Sharing Questions

1. In His apparition to St. Margaret Mary, Jesus expressed sorrow over the "coldness and contempt" He receives. In our modern lives, what does this "coldness" look like, and how can we cultivate warmth and responsiveness to His love?
2. Matthew 11 promises rest for our souls. What is the difference between true spiritual rest found in the Sacred Heart and mere physical relaxation or escapism?
3. The CSDC teaches that charity and mercy must spread into the "network" of our relationships. How can we implement a culture of mercy and ease the burdens of others in our specific administrative or professional environments?

5. Litany of the Sacred Heart (Group Prayer)

Leader: Lord, have mercy. *Response:* **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader: Christ, have mercy. *Response:* **Christ, have mercy.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, patient and most merciful... *Response:* **Have mercy on us.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, enriching all who invoke You... *Response:* **Have mercy on us.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, fountain of life and holiness... *Response:* **Have mercy on us.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, propitiation for our sins... *Response:* **Have mercy on us.**

(Pause for spontaneous intercessions. After each: "Heart of Jesus, we trust in You.")

Leader: Jesus, meek and humble of heart. *Response:* **Make our hearts like unto Thine.**

6. Preview of Next Week

Next week, we will look at the fiery, all-consuming nature of Christ's love, exploring the writings of St. Thérèse of Lisieux and St. John of the Cross. As St. Thérèse beautifully wrote: *"To me He has granted His infinite Mercy, and through it I contemplate and adore the other divine perfections!"*

7. Closing Prayer

O Most Merciful Jesus, we thank You for the infinite love of Your Sacred Heart. Teach us to respond to Your love with gratitude, to find our rest in Your gentleness, and to be instruments of Your mercy in a world that is heavy and burdened. We ask this in Your Holy Name. Amen.

Week 4 (Adult Version): The Fire of Love

1. Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, You are the living flame of love. O Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, fountain of eternal life, Your Heart is a glowing furnace of love. You are my refuge and my sanctuary. O my amiable Savior,

consume my heart with that burning fire with which Yours is ever inflamed. Pour down on my soul those graces which flow from Your love, and let my heart be so united with Yours that our wills may be one, and mine may in all things be conformed to Yours. Amen. (Prayer of St. Claude de la Colombière)

2. Scripture and Meditation

Scripture (Luke 12:49-50): *"I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed!"*

Meditation: In *Dilexit Nos*, Pope Francis speaks of "A Thirst for Souls," reminding us that Christ's love is not passive; it is a burning, urgent desire for union with us. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus speaks of this love as a "fire" He wishes were already kindled, expressing a divine "constraint" or anguish until His saving work is complete. The great Carmelite mystics understood this deeply. St. John of the Cross described God as a "Living Flame of Love" that purifies and transforms the soul, just as fire transforms wood into fire itself. Centuries later, St. Thérèse of Lisieux took this further with her "Act of Oblation to Merciful Love," offering herself as a victim of holocaust not to God's justice, but to His *Merciful Love*, asking to be entirely consumed by the fire of the Sacred Heart.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC 696) explicitly links this fire to the Holy Spirit and the Heart of Christ: "Fire symbolizes the transforming energy of the Holy Spirit's actions... Jesus will say: 'I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!' This is the fire of the Holy Spirit, in the form of tongues of fire, who rests on the disciples on the morning of Pentecost and fills them with himself."

This transforming fire cannot be contained privately. The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (CSDC 207) asserts that this burning charity must animate society: "Social charity makes us love the common good. It makes us effectively seek the good of all people... Charity is the greatest social commandment." The fire of the Sacred Heart burns away our selfish individualism, compelling us to view our civic duties, our organizational leadership, and our daily work as the very places where Christ's fire must be kindled.

3. Lectio Divina Prayer Prompts (may also be used for journaling)

- **Read:** Slowly reread Luke 12:49-50. What does the word "constraint" or "anguish" reveal to you about Jesus' desire for humanity?
- **Reflect:** St. John of the Cross says God's love is a fire that transforms us into itself. What "wood" in your life (habits, fears, attachments) needs to be thrown into this fire to be purified?
- **Respond:** St. Thérèse offered herself to be consumed by Christ's merciful love. Speak to Jesus about your willingness (or hesitation) to let His fire completely change your priorities.
- **Rest:** Spend three minutes in silence, imagining the warmth and light of a brilliant fire, allowing it to thaw any coldness in your heart.

4. Small Group Sharing Questions

1. Jesus says He has come to bring fire to the earth. In our modern, highly managed lives, we often prefer things to be calm and predictable. How does the "fire" of the Sacred Heart challenge our desire for comfortable control?
2. St. Thérèse surrendered herself to the "consuming fire" of Merciful Love through "little ways" and daily sacrifices. How can we practically live this out in our homes or workplaces?
3. The CSDC calls charity the "greatest social commandment," urging us to seek the common good. If the fire of the Sacred Heart were truly alive in our local community or workplace, what specific social dynamic or injustice would burn away?

5. Litany of the Sacred Heart (Group Prayer)

Leader: Lord, have mercy. *Response:* **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader: Christ, have mercy. *Response:* **Christ, have mercy.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, burning furnace of charity... *Response:* **Have mercy on us.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, glowing with love for us... *Response:* **Have mercy on us.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, zealous for the salvation of souls... *Response:* **Have mercy on us.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, our life and resurrection... *Response:* **Have mercy on us.**

(Pause for spontaneous intercessions. After each: "Heart of Jesus, we trust in You.")

Leader: Jesus, meek and humble of heart. *Response:* **Make our hearts like unto Thine.**

6. Preview of Next Week

Next week, we will transition into "The Social Heart," looking at how this interior devotion radically changes how we treat the poor and marginalized. As St. Vincent de Paul perfectly summarized: "*Charity is the cement which binds Communities to God and persons to one another.*"

7. Closing Prayer

O my God, I offer You all my actions of this day for the intentions and for the glory of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I desire to sanctify every beat of my heart, my every thought, my simplest works, by uniting them to His infinite merits; and I wish to make reparation for my sins by casting them into the furnace of His Merciful Love. Amen. (Adapted from St. Thérèse of Lisieux)

Week 5 (Adult Version): The Social Heart

1. Opening Prayer

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, to You I consecrate and offer up my person and my life, my actions, trials, and sufferings, that my entire being may henceforth only be employed in loving, honoring and glorifying You. O Sacred Heart, be the sweet rule of my life, the safeguard of my salvation, the support of my weakness, the cure of all my faults, and my sure refuge at the hour of my death. Give us the grace to see Your face in the poor and the courage to serve You in the most abandoned. Amen. (Adapted from St. Margaret Mary Alacoque)

2. Scripture and Meditation

Scripture (Matthew 25:31, 34-37, 40): *"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne... Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'*

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?' ... The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

Meditation: In *Dilexit Nos*, Pope Francis emphasizes "Love in Society," making it unmistakably clear that devotion to the Sacred Heart cannot remain a private, comfortable piety. If we truly press our ear to the chest of Christ, we will hear His heart beating for the poor, the abandoned, and the marginalized. St. Vincent de Paul, a giant of social charity, taught his followers that when they leave their prayers to serve the poor, they are not leaving God, but "leaving God for God." St. Teresa of Calcutta echoed this centuries later, recognizing the wounded Heart of Jesus in the slums: *"I see Jesus in every human being. I say to myself, this is hungry Jesus, I must feed him."*

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC 2443) roots this deeply in our faith: "God blesses those who come to the aid of the poor and rebukes those who turn away from them... It is by what they have done for the poor that Jesus Christ will recognize his chosen ones." The wounds we venerate in the Sacred Heart are the same wounds we are called to bind up in our neighbors.

This requires more than occasional almsgiving; it demands a structural response. The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (CSDC 182) introduces the "preferential option for the poor," describing it as "a special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity." Devotion to the Social Heart of Jesus means allowing His compassion to dictate not just our personal checkbooks, but our organizational structures, our civic voting, and our professional leadership.

3. Lectio Divina Prayer Prompts (may also be used for journaling)

- **Read:** Slowly reread the passage from Matthew 25. Which specific action (feeding, clothing, visiting) draws your attention today?
- **Reflect:** "Whatever you did for the least of these... you did for me." How does it change your view of the homeless, the difficult coworker, or the marginalized to know Christ's Heart resides in them?
- **Respond:** Ask Jesus to reveal your blind spots. Where are you failing to see His wounded Heart in the people you interact with daily?
- **Rest:** Spend three minutes in silence. Instead of looking inward, imagine the face of someone who is suffering, and silently place them within the Heart of Jesus.

4. Small Group Sharing Questions

1. Pope Francis warns against a devotion to the Sacred Heart that is merely "private piety." How can we keep our spiritual practices from becoming self-centered and ensure they push us out into the community?
2. St. Vincent de Paul said serving the poor is "leaving God for God." What are the practical obstacles that keep us from viewing acts of service as profound acts of worship?
3. The CSDC emphasizes that social charity must apply to institutions and systems. For those managing personnel transitions, overseeing operations across multiple sites, or making high-level strategic decisions, how can the compassion of the Sacred Heart directly influence administrative leadership and systemic policies?

5. Litany of the Sacred Heart (Group Prayer)

Leader: Lord, have mercy. *Response:* **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader: Christ, have mercy. *Response:* **Christ, have mercy.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, treasure-house of wisdom and knowledge... *Response:* **Have mercy on us.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, in whom dwells the fullness of God... *Response:* **Have mercy on us.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, overflowing with love for the poor... *Response:* **Have mercy on us.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, suffering in the marginalized and forgotten... *Response:* **Have mercy on us.**

(Pause for spontaneous intercessions. After each: "Heart of Jesus, we trust in You.")

Leader: Jesus, meek and humble of heart. *Response:* **Make our hearts like unto Thine.**

6. Preview of Next Week

Next week, we will conclude our study with "The Missionary Heart," exploring how we are sent forth into the world. We will look to St. Charles de Foucauld, who went to the Sahara Desert simply to be a loving presence, writing: "*I must make people say of me, 'Since this man is so good, his religion must be good.'*"

7. Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, Your Sacred Heart is an open door of mercy for the world. Give us the eyes to see You in the poor, the sick, and the lonely. Give us the hands to serve You in the marginalized. May our devotion to Your Heart never be an excuse to retreat from the world, but rather the very fuel that sends us out to love it. Amen.

Week 6 (Adult Version): The Missionary Heart

1. Opening Prayer

Father, I abandon myself into Your hands; do with me what You will. Whatever You may do, I thank You. I am ready for all, I accept all. Let only Your will be done in me, and in all Your creatures. I wish no more than this, O Lord. Into Your hands I commend my soul; I offer it to You with all the love of my heart, for I love You, Lord, and so need to give myself, to surrender myself into Your hands, without reserve, and with boundless confidence, for You are my Father. Amen. (Prayer of Abandonment, St. Charles de Foucauld)

2. Scripture and Meditation

Scripture (John 15:9-12, 15-16): *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you... I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last."*

Meditation: In *Dilexit Nos*, Pope Francis reminds us that an authentic encounter with the Sacred Heart naturally culminates in a "Sending Forth." Love, by its very nature, cannot remain enclosed; it must overflow. We see this perfectly embodied in the life of St. Charles de Foucauld. After a profound conversion, Charles did not retreat into comfortable piety. He traveled to the remote Sahara Desert to live among the Muslim Tuareg people. He did not go to preach with loud words or theological arguments, but to be a "universal brother." He believed that by living a life of radical hospitality, silent adoration, and humble work, he could make the love of the Sacred Heart present. He wrote: *"I must make people say of me, 'Since this man is so good, his religion must be good.'"*

This is the essence of the Church's missionary mandate. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC 851) states: "It is from God's love for all men that the Church in every age receives both the obligation and the vigor of her missionary dynamism." We do not share the faith out of a desire for

conquest, but because we have been drawn into the Heart of Christ and wish to draw others into that same joy.

For most of us, this mission field is not the Sahara Desert. As the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (CSDC 580) notes, the laity are called to transform the world from within: "The lay faithful are called to cultivate an authentic lay spirituality by which they are reborn as new men and women... so that their daily work in the world, in the various areas of public life, is transformed into a spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God." Whether we are managing personnel, making high-level strategic decisions, or simply navigating family life, we are called to be universal brothers and sisters, allowing the silent, powerful love of the Sacred Heart to bear fruit in our leadership and our relationships.

3. Lectio Divina Prayer Prompts (may also be used for journaling)

- **Read:** Slowly read the passage from John 15. Notice the phrase: "I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit."
- **Reflect:** St. Charles de Foucauld wanted his very presence to be a silent witness to the goodness of God. What does the "silent witness" of your daily work and administrative leadership say to those around you?
- **Respond:** Ask Jesus to show you who in your life needs a "universal brother" or sister right now—someone who needs love without an agenda.
- **Rest:** Spend three minutes in silence, resting in the profound truth that Christ calls you His "friend," not just His servant.

4. Small Group Sharing Questions

1. Jesus tells us to "remain in my love" so that our joy may be complete. How do we balance this call to interior rest with the intense demands of our outward, professional responsibilities?
2. St. Charles de Foucauld sought to be a "universal brother," breaking down religious and cultural silos. How can this concept of universal brotherhood challenge the divisions or "silos" we experience in our workplaces or communities?
3. The CSDC states that our daily work should be a "spiritual sacrifice." How does viewing your daily tasks (even the mundane or stressful ones) through the lens of the Sacred Heart change your approach to your career?

5. Litany of the Sacred Heart (Group Prayer)

Leader: Lord, have mercy. *Response:* **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader: Christ, have mercy. *Response:* **Christ, have mercy.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, source of all consolation... *Response:* **Have mercy on us.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, our life and resurrection... *Response:* **Have mercy on us.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, sending us forth in love... *Response:* **Have mercy on us.**

Leader: Heart of Jesus, beating in the heart of the world... *Response:* **Have mercy on us.**

(Pause for spontaneous intercessions. After each: "**Heart of Jesus, we trust in You.**")

Leader: Jesus, meek and humble of heart. Response: **Make our hearts like unto Thine.**

6. Conclusion and Sending Forth

As we conclude these six weeks, we leave the "upper room" to carry this devotion into the world. Let us remember the words of St. Teresa of Avila: "*Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world.*"

7. Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, You have called us friends and invited us to rest in the shelter of Your Sacred Heart. Now, send us forth. Give us the courage of St. Charles de Foucauld to be witnesses of Your love in the ordinary deserts of our daily lives. May everything we do bear fruit that lasts. We ask this through Your Most Holy Name. Amen.