

DILEXIT NOS

The Importance of the Heart



Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network
UNITED STATES | CANADA APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

Introduction

Pope Francis's encyclical *Dilexit Nos* reminds us of a profound truth: God loved us first. His love is not earned but freely given, calling us into a deeper relationship with Him. This guide is the first in a four-part journey through *Dilexit Nos*, offering Scripture, reflections, and prayer to help you open your heart to God's unfailing love. Whether alone or in a group, take this opportunity to pause, reflect, and respond to His invitation to love. Let this be a time of renewal as you grow in faith and embrace the love that transforms.

Opening Prayer

- Begin with the Sign of the Cross
- Prayer: The Daily Offering

Father, here I am. I know you are always with me. I place my heart in the Heart of your Son, Jesus, who gives Himself to us in the Eucharist each day. May your Holy Spirit make me His friend and apostle, available for His mission of compassion. Take, Lord and receive all of my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings this day -all I am and possess- in communion with my brothers and sisters in the Pope's prayer network. With Mother Mary, I pray for the mission of the Church, for our bishops, and for the Pope's intention this month. Amen.

Grace

"Let us turn, then, to the heart of Christ, that core of his being, which is a blazing furnace of divine and human love and the most sublime fulfillment to which humanity can aspire. There, in that heart, we truly come at last to know ourselves and we learn how to love." Jesus, help us to turn to your heart, enkindle in us the fire of your love. Amen.

Quotes from *Dilexit nos*



Paragraph 11: “If we devalue the heart, we also devalue what it means to speak from the heart, to act with the heart, to cultivate and heal the heart. If we fail to appreciate the specificity of the heart, we miss the messages that the mind alone cannot communicate; we miss out on the richness of our encounters with others; we miss out on poetry.”

Paragraph 21: “This profound core, present in every man and woman, is not that of the soul, but of the entire person in his or her unique psychosomatic identity. Everything finds its unity in the heart, which can be the dwelling-place of love in all its spiritual, psychic and even physical dimensions. In a word, if love reigns in our heart, we become, in a complete and luminous way, the persons we are meant to be, for every human being is created above all else for love. In the deepest fiber of our being, we were made to love and to be loved.”

Sacred Scripture

1 John 4:7-8 “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

Ezekiel 36:26 “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”

Reflection Thoughts

The Heart as the core encompasses our mind, body, soul, our knowledge of ourselves, our openness to encountering others, to meeting God and his love. He calls us to be sincere and not conceal our hearts because concealing leads to confusion and a lack of understanding of ourselves and others. Concealing leads us farther away from others and deeper into isolation, and hardness of heart.

God's love has the power to take a heart that is not responsive to the love around them; an isolated, lonely, and cold heart, and is able to cultivate and heal it. God is able to bring us back to life, and open our minds, bodies and souls to see the blessings around us even in the midst of trial and suffering. He is able to bring healing, and restoration to the places of ourselves where we once asked, Do I even have a heart?

Reflection Questions

1. What resonates with you from Paragraph 11 and 21?
2. How do you see in your own life or in the lives of those around you how much we devalue the heart?
3. Do you believe that you were made to love and be loved?
4. How can you allow God to "Give you a new heart, and put a new spirit within you"?
 - a. What do you think that would change in you, and in your life?

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*The Heart that has
Loved so Greatly*



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Grace

We pray for the grace to accept the tangible love of Christ in our lives, one that is human and divine. Holy Spirit, set our hearts on fire for the Sacred Heart that we may share this love with those around us.

Quotes from *Dilexit nos*



Paragraph 60: “In gazing upon the Lord’s heart, we contemplate a physical reality, his human flesh, which enables him to possess genuine human emotions and feelings, like ourselves, albeit fully transformed by his divine love. Our devotion must ascend to the infinite love of the Person of the Son of God, yet we need to keep in mind that his divine love is inseparable from his human love.” (Pope Francis)

Paragraph 64: “From the infinite horizon of his love, God wished to enter into the limits of human history and the human condition. He took on a body and a heart. Thus, we can contemplate and encounter the infinite in the finite, the invisible and ineffable mystery in the human heart of Jesus the Nazarene.” (Pope Benedict XVI)

Paragraph 81: “All of us, when we pause in silence, need to feel not only the beating of our own heart, but deeper still, the beating of a trustworthy presence, perceptible with faith’s senses and yet much more real: the presence of Christ, the heart of the world.” (Pope Benedict XVI)

Sacred Scripture

John 15:9-13 “As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. ‘I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.’”

Reflection Thoughts

The devotion to the Sacred Heart is not about venerating a physical organ, but about entering into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. The Sacred Heart embodies Jesus’ human and divine heart, allowing for us to better understand His infinite and perfect love for humanity. This same heart of Jesus is still active in our lives through the working of the Holy Spirit. In the silence of our own hearts, we can find the presence of Christ, which is the heart of the world. We are called to respond to this love by placing our trust in the “infinite mercy of a God who loves us unconditionally and has already given us everything in the cross of Jesus Christ” (St. Therese of the Child Jesus).

Reflection Questions

1. Which of the quotes resonates with you and why?
2. What does the image of the Sacred Heart represent to you personally?
Do you have any personal devotions to the heart of Jesus?
3. How do you view the love of Jesus? Do you connect more with His human or divine love?

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*A Love That Gives
Itself As Drink*



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Quotes from *Dilexit nos*



Paragraph 96 “The open fountain is the wounded side of Christ”

Paragraph 97 ‘Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink... out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water’ (Jn 7:37-38) For this to be accomplished, however, it was necessary for Jesus “hour” to come, for he ‘was not yet glorified’ (7:39). That fulfilment was to come on the cross, in the blood and water that flowed from the Lord’s side.

Paragraph 101 “The pierced heart of Christ embodies all God’s declarations of love present in the Scriptures. That love is no mere matter of words; rather, the open side of his Son is a source of life for those whom he loves, the fount that quenches the thirst of his people. As Saint John Paul II pointed out, ‘the essential elements of devotion [to the Sacred Heart] belong in a permanent fashion to the spirituality of the Church throughout her history; for since the beginning, the Church has looked to the heart of Christ pierced on the Cross’. ”

Sacred Scripture

John 7:37-39 “‘Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink’ Whoever believes in me, as scripture says: ‘Rivers of living water will flow from within him’ He said this in reference to the Spirit that those who came to believe in him were to receive. There was, of course, no Spirit yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.”

Reflection Thoughts

Pope Francis shares with us the wisdom of Saints and Scripture, inviting us to enter into prayer and see Christ’s love from different perspectives—His deep thirst for us and our response to Him.

We see the open wound in Christ’s side in the Divine Mercy image, just as we see it whenever we gaze upon a crucifix. St. John Paul II reminds us that devotion to the Sacred Heart has existed since the beginning—because from the very start, believers have turned their eyes to the Heart of Christ, pierced on the Cross. In John 7:37-39, Jesus reveals that our deepest thirst finds its answer in Him, in the very wound He would endure for our sake.

How do you respond to this invitation? By believing in Him, by drawing near to His Heart, by allowing His love to transform you. His open Heart is an endless source of mercy, always calling you to come, to trust, and to drink deeply from His love.

Reflection Questions

1. How does recognizing Christ’s thirst for you change the way you respond to Him in prayer and daily life?
2. When you see the wound in Christ’s side—whether in the Divine Mercy image or on a crucifix—how does it speak to your own thirst for love, healing, and mercy?
3. In what ways can you deepen your devotion to the Sacred Heart and allow His love to shape your heart more fully?

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Love for Love



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Grace

Jesus, help us to thirst for your most sacred heart so that we may be engulfed in your love and mercy and share it with all of those who you have put in our life. Inspire us to be missionaries of your most Sacred Heart in our daily life so that others may come to know you.

Quotes from *Dilexit nos*



Paragraph 173 “Our union with Christ is meant not only to satisfy our own thirst, but also to make us springs of living water for others”

Paragraph 189 “Even if the irreparable cannot be completely repaired, love can always be reborn, making the hurt bearable”

Paragraph 197 “God’s justice is understood only in the light of his love”

Paragraph 200 “Sisters and brothers, I propose that we develop this means of reparation, which is, in a word, to offer the heart of Christ a new possibility of spreading in this world the flames of his ardent and gracious love”

Sacred Scripture

1 Corinthians 9:16 “For a heart that loves, this is not a duty but an irrepressible need: “Woe to me if I do not proclaim the Gospel!”

Jeremiah 20:9 “Within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot”

Reflection Thoughts

In this final chapter of *Dilexit Nos*, Pope Francis calls us to action as we seek to spread the heart of Jesus to everyone that we encounter. He explains that it is through the healing love of Christ that we are able to become springs of water for others and make the suffering in our own lives bearable. We are called to live out the “missionary dimension of our love for the heart of Christ” (205) by spreading the gospel and allowing our actions to be driven by love. Pope Francis emphasizes the importance of having a community of faith to lean on to fuel our friendship with Jesus and ultimately become better missionaries of love.

Reflection Questions

1. Which of these quotes/scripture resonates with you and why? Which one is the most difficult for you?
2. Do you have a community of faith in your life that you can rely on for spiritual support?
3. Who has God put in your life for you to share the Gospel with?
4. In what ways can you be a missionary for the Sacred Heart?