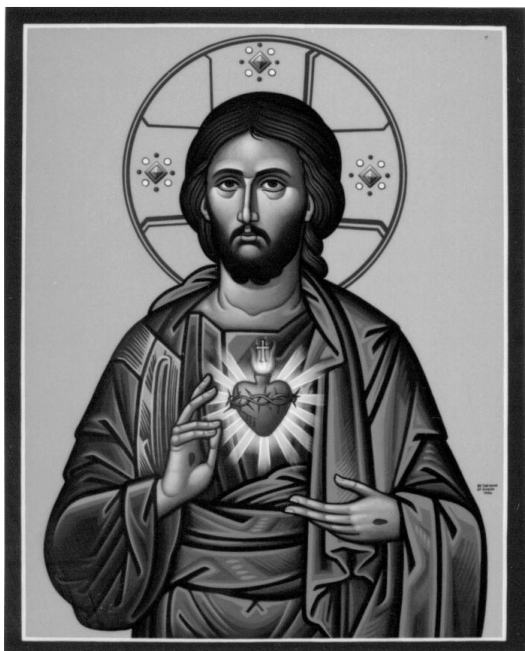


# THE SACRED HEART

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## **FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART:**

This feast is always celebrated on the third Friday after Pentecost (which usually falls sometime in June). It is not a celebration of a biblical event, but rather a celebration of God's love, symbolized by the heart of Christ. The feast first appeared in the universal church calendar in 1856—a few of years before our parish was established.

## **SACRED HEART ICON**

An icon of the Sacred Heart can be found on the East wall of the church vestibule. Icons are not realistic portraits. They are highly stylized pictures that are rich in symbolism and attempt to give us a view of the divine. They were developed in the church of eastern Europe to communicate theological truths.

This icon of the Sacred Heart from Monastery Icons was painted “by the hands of Simeon,” one of the Desert Fathers from Light of Christ Monastery in California. It depicts Christ as both human and divine; both man and God. His large eyes show his divine awareness, his omnipresence. His small mouth shows his sensuous nature in total control. The gold stripe on his shoulder is a symbol from Roman times. The emperor and emperor's son were the only ones allowed to wear gold because the Romans thought them sent from God.

The heart is the central image in this icon. It is a spiritual heart rather than a physical one. It stands out from his body almost as if it were floating in front of Christ. The heart is encircled with a crown of thorns. It is pierced, and flames (heat, torture) rise out of the heart. All of these depict his suffering during the crucifixion. Rising out of the flames is the cross: out of his agony he established his church.

## **SACRED HEART SYMBOL**

“The physical Heart of Christ is the principal sign and symbol of the threefold Love with which he loves his eternal Father and all mankind. A symbol of the divine love he shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit but that he, the Word made flesh, alone manifests

through a weak and perishable body, since “in Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 2:9) It is the symbol of that burning love which, infused into his soul, enriches the human will of Christ and enlightens and governs its acts by the most perfect knowledge derived both from the beatific vision and that which is directly infused. Finally, it is the symbol also of sensible love, since the body of Christ possesses full powers of feeling and perception—in fact more so than any other human body.”

(Pope Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas*, II 55-57)

## **SACRED HEART DEVOTION**

Several centuries ago, active participation in the action of the liturgy was in a large part denied the laity. In order to keep their faith alive, many of the faithful made devotional practices an important part of their lives. Devotion to the Sacred Heart was one of those practices. It became popular in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century because of Margaret Mary Alacoque. A cloistered nun burdened with intense physical and emotional suffering, she described visions of Christ whose love burned unceasingly: “Behold the heart that has loved people so, yet is loved so little in return.” The devotion celebrates the love of God manifested in the heart of Jesus. Almost 200 years after Margaret Mary’s visions, a special feast was mandated for the universal church. In 1899 Pope Leo XII asked the world to be consecrated to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.