

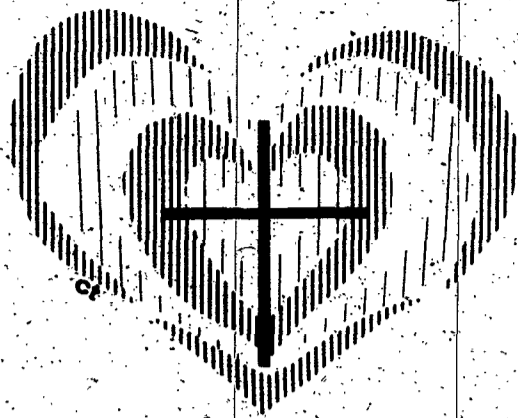
Year of Family Needs Sacred Heart

By Father Walter Kern

1980 has been designated as the "Year of the Family." During this year, and afterwards, Church and State will attempt to strengthen the family with a wide variety of plans. One religious program for doing this is the consecration of the family to the Sacred Heart. An ideal time for thinking about it and doing it is June, the month of the Sacred Heart.

Educational programs for the Year of the Family point out the essential nature and value of the family. While single-parent families achieve many of these family values, the family must still be considered the permanent monogamous union of husband and wife, with their children. The family has been described in many ways: the oldest and most stable social institution; the basic building block of society; the first school of love; the origin of human life; the cradle of the faith; the garden of virtues; human cause of the growth of the Mystical Body and People of God; and so on. Crucial to all of these positive values is love. Love is origin of the family, its chief motivation, its binding force and its continual goal.

Christ came to this earth to prove to us that God loves us and wants to be merciful to us. The Gospels make it clear that He wishes His followers



to love everyone. It is only natural, then, to think of linking family love with God's love revealed to us in Christ.

Eastern Christians — Catholics and Orthodox — have long used a beautiful title for Christ: the Lover of Mankind. In this phrase, they summarize all that Christ is, what He has done for us, and the reason why He has done it.

In Western spirituality, a similar relationship to the loving Christ developed into the theology of and devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This Christ-centered devotion is based on a relationship with the Person of Jesus precisely because He is loving, with the use of the near-universal symbol of love, the heart, as its visible reminder. Properly understood, this devotion is the meeting place in the "heart-center" of Christ (to use Karl Rahner's term) of the

divine and human love of the God-Man for the Trinity, of God's love for us as His creatures, and of our love in return. Sometimes it has been served well by images and prayers produced to foster it; at other times not. But it has endured because it is anchored in essential truths of our faith: the Incarnation, the Redemption, the role of Christ as Mediator, and the Eucharist. The mark of the wound in the Heart of the Risen Christ is its scriptural symbol!

Families respond very warmly to the loving actions of Christ. To list but a few involving the family, He was once a member of a human family; He blessed the wedding at Cana with His presence; He cured a Syro-Phoenician and other children of diabolical possession; He raised the widow of Naim's son and Jairus' daughter from

the dead; He cured Peter's mother-in-law; He blessed the little children the apostles wanted to chase away; He said that those who led children into sin would receive a heavy penalty; He enjoyed the hospitality of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus; He tried to provide for His Mother Mary after He was gone; and so on. It is only natural to want to dedicate oneself as an individual and together as a family to Christ as the Guest, Friend and Lord of our home. When one unites the love of Christ for us with the love of the family, one seeks to join two of the greatest love-forces known to humankind!

Reduced to its essentials, family consecration to the Sacred Heart is a ritualized decision to dedicate ourselves totally to Christ, along with the use of an image of the Sacred Heart to recall and motivate our self-giving. Enthronement Rites, either with the father leading the prayers within a Bible Service or with a home Mass, simply make the "essentials" more impressive. There is usually a family procession to the place

of enthronement, readings from Scripture, a prayer of consecration, the signing of the document, and the actual enthroning of the Sacred Heart image as the Guest, Friend and Lord of the Home. Pictures, rituals and prayers can be obtained from either the National Enthronement Center, 3 Adams St., Fairhaven, MA 02719; or the Apostleship of Prayer, 114 E.

13th St., New York, N.Y. 10003.

1980 is the Year of the Family. Do not overlook the consecration of your family as a powerful religious way of drawing the family closer to Christ and each other. It is quite simple to do, but opens each heart to the great strength and grace of Jesus' Heart.

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The Open Window

They Refuse Baptism for Their Child

Dear Father Hohman,

A constant worry to me is the fact that my son and my daughter-in-law just never attend Church. They have a daughter who was born three months ago and when I ask them about the Baptism they say that they'll get around to it eventually. They seem to have no desire for Church and say in

Day of Adoration

A day of "preaching, teaching and healing" will take place June 29 at the Shrine of North American Martyrs in Auriesville, N.Y., according to a release from the Holy Family Renewal Center.

Fathers John Bertolucci, from the Albany Diocese, and Michael Scanlon, president of Steubenville College, will head up the event.

Auriesville is located just off the New York State Thruway, Exit 27. For further information those interested may call (315) 823-1548.

Holy Hour

Father James Wolfe will be the leader for a Holy Hour scheduled at 7:30 p.m., Monday, June 16, at the Sisters of St. Joseph Infirmary. The series of Holy Hours is sponsored by the Holy Trinity Chapter of the Peoples Eucharistic League.

fact that it "turns them off." They say that the Church is no different from any other institution. It has its politics and its Pauline Fathers and its favoritisms and all the human weaknesses that any other organization has. They say that they believe in God and they pray to God and that any allegiance to the Church is quite superfluous.

I am beside myself with worry about that little child who is being deprived of the Sacrament of Baptism and I surely would like to understand where my son and daughter-in-law are coming from. I was brought up a strict Catholic and I just cannot see how they can reject the whole thing. The thought of their losing their souls just makes me sick to my stomach. What should I do?

S.M.

Dear S.M.,

The problem you have is a rather frequent one in this day and age and one for which there is no real solution. I think the basic problem is one that we need to solve ourselves before we can help those who are agonizing their way through it or have already turned us off. To me there are three levels of faith and trust. The first and the absolutely most important level of faith is that Jesus Christ is Lord. This means that I believe in His saving power and trust my life to Him and to His words and to His commands and I believe with all my heart that I shall find the fullness of life here and hereafter. The second level of belief is that it is

necessary as a Christian to believe in the need for community, an assembly of believers, a people of God which we call a Church. However, this level does not abstract from the idea of an institution. The level is the institutional Church which is necessary but only in a more remote sense to bring the people of God together and to help them to live and share as a faith community.

When we tend to emphasize (and I realize this is mostly a matter of emphasis) the institutional Church rather than the fundamental faith in Jesus Christ then we open ourselves to all the weaknesses which are inherent in the Church and in its leaders. When those weaknesses stand out and become a reason for failing trust then people tend to move away but they are not moving away necessarily from Jesus Christ. They are in many instances simply moving away from the human weaknesses of the institution, which is in third order of importance.

As to the Baptism of your grandchild there is not the same kind of urgency to have the child baptized as there was just some years ago. There developed a superstitious belief that if the child were not baptized within a month that somehow it would have some serious evil befall it or that if it died it would end up in Limbo. Neither of those things, of course, is credible and so therefore we urge people to bring their children within the scope of the faith community early so that we might begin the task of bringing them to the fullest possible sharing in the Christian life and therefore the fullest possibility of making their own commitment when they are old enough.

I doubt if this will diminish your worry very much but I hope it will help you to understand what is happening a little better.



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