

In honor of the Sacred Heart

OFS Monthly Formation

June 2023



Stained glass window of the Sacred Heart, side chapel, St. Francis by the Sea Church, Hibiscus Coast

Franciscan writings:

As we are about to celebrate this month, on June 16th, the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart, it may be timely to reflect upon some Franciscan writings on this great feast and devotion in the Church. Let us begin with a short passage that refers to the Sacred Heart in our Franciscan Tradition:

“St. Francis so loved the Sacred Heart, that our Lord Himself gave our Seraphic Father to S. Margaret Mary as her special Patron. St. Clare found ineffable delight in her daily salutation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. All the Saints of the Order were remarkable for their zeal, in promoting this devotion, particularly St. Bonaventure, St. Margaret of Cortona, St. Bernadine of Sienna and St. Leonard of Port Maurice. The third Order was solemnly consecrated to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, in the year 1873”(*The Franciscan Tertiary Manual and Prayer Book*, p. 230).

More recently we have the teachings of Saint Maximilian Kolbe on the Sacred Heart. Perhaps more well known for his devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom he called the Immaculata (in honor of her Immaculate Conception). Yet St. Maximilian established the Militia Immaculata (MI) catholic evangelical movement in Rome on October 16, 1917, for the express purpose of bringing about the conversion of hearts, the sanctification of souls and ultimately the universal reign of the Sacred Heart (divine love in all hearts), through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. St. Maximilian wrote that when Jesus “appeared to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque” (most well known for her promotion of devotion to the Sacred Heart in the 17th Century), our Lord “pointed to St. Francis, and said: ‘Here is the saint closest to my divine Heart’”(The Writings of St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe Volume II: Various Writings, 1094).



St. Maximilian considered that the essence of love is “the merging of our will with that of God”, that “this is the essence of love that has to be kindled in us, inflame the world, and destroy, consume all evil in it. It is that fire of which the Saviour said ‘I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!’ (Lk12:49)” (The Writings of St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe Volume II: Various Writings, 1160).

St. Bonaventure, in his Major Life, writes that St. Francis “was united with an unbreakable bond of love to the angelic spirits who burn with a marvellous fire and who inflame the hearts of the faithful and enable them to enter into God” (9:3).

St. Maximilian’s MI Movement - Source: www.prayersandpetitions.org

The fruit of divine love in the heart of Saint Francis - Celano writes:

“Many among the people, nobles and plebeians, clerks and lay-folk, pierced by God's inspiration, began to come to holy Francis, longing evermore to fight under his discipline and leadership: all of whom the Saint of God, like a plenteous stream of heavenly grace, watered with anointing showers, and beautified the field of their hearts with flowers of virtue. Truly an excellent craftsman after whose pattern, rule and teaching, heralded with noteworthy proclamation, Christ's Church is being renewed in either sex, and is triumphing in a threefold army of men who are to be saved. For he assigned to all their rule of life, and pointed out truly the way to be saved in every station..... Verily on the foundation of steadfastness a noble structure of charity arose, wherein living stones heaped together from all parts of the world were built up into an habitation of the Holy Spirit. Oh, with what ardor of charity did Christ's new disciples burn! What love of the pious fellowship flourished among them! For whenever they came together in any place, or met one another in the way (as is usual), there sprang up a shoot of spiritual love scattering over all love the seeds of true affection. What can I say more? Their embraces were chaste, their feelings gentle, their kisses holy, their intercourse sweet, their laughter modest, their look cheerful, their eye single, their spirit submissive, their tongue peaceable, their answer soft, their purpose identical, their obedience ready, their hand untiring” (The Life of Saint Francis, The First Book, Chapter XV).

OFS Rule, Chapter Two, The Way of Life, Article 4:

“The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans is this: to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people”.

Consider:

Who or what is the inspiration, at the center of, our daily lives?



St. Clare carrying a ciborium, by Alfred Child
St. Brendan’s Cathedral, Galway, Ireland

Reflecting upon these words from the Prayer of St. Clare (in relation to Christ) let us pray to the Father that we may: ‘Behold Him, consider Him, contemplate Him, desire to be like Him’. Amen.