

Deepening the Call: Reflections on the Diaconate

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Reparation and the Diaconal Heart:

Living Before the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart Of Mary

In 1917, amid the devastation of the First World War and the quiet suffering of a rural Portuguese countryside, heaven intervened with a message both urgent and tender. At Fatima, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to three shepherd children not to introduce a novelty, but to recall the Church to a forgotten posture of love: conversion, prayer, and reparation. Her words revealed a maternal sorrow rooted in humanity's indifference to God and a divine desire that wounded love be met with responsive love. At the heart of the Fatima message stands the call to make reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a call that remains strikingly relevant for the Church today and particularly illuminating for the spirituality and ministry of the deacon.

The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus emerged prominently in the seventeenth century through the revelations to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque. In these visions, Christ revealed His Heart as burning with love for humanity and pierced by ingratitude, indifference, and sacrilege. The Heart of Jesus is not a symbol detached from the Gospel; it is the interior life of the Son of God laid bare. It reveals divine love poured out without reserve, love that suffers rejection yet continues to give itself. The Church has consistently taught that devotion to the Sacred Heart is ultimately a contemplation of the mystery of the Incarnation and the redemptive love of Christ made visible and tangible.

Closely united to this devotion is that of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Mary's Heart, preserved from sin and wholly receptive to God, stands as the perfect human response to divine love. At Fatima, Our Lady spoke explicitly of her Immaculate Heart as a refuge and a path leading souls to God. Her Heart is wounded not by personal sin but by her intimate participation in the suffering of her Son and by her maternal sorrow over humanity's refusal of grace. Reparation to the Immaculate Heart, therefore, is inseparable from reparation to the Sacred Heart; it is the offering of love in union with the Mother who stood faithfully at the foot of the Cross.

Reparation, properly understood, is not an attempt to "balance accounts" with God, as though human acts could compensate for sin in a juridical sense. Rather, reparation is a response of love to wounded love. It flows from the recognition that sin wounds relationships, our communion with God, with one another, and within ourselves. Acts of reparation are expressions

of solidarity with Christ in His redemptive suffering, offered freely and lovingly as participation in His saving work. They are rooted not in fear or guilt, but in compassion and gratitude.

This understanding of reparation sheds particular light on the vocation of the deacon. Configured sacramentally to Christ the Servant, the deacon is called to make visible in the Church the love that kneels, washes feet, and pours itself out for others. His spirituality is not primarily defined by function, but by relationship, an intimate communion with Christ that shapes every aspect of his life and ministry. Reparation, in this sense, is not an added devotion layered onto diaconal life; it is woven into its very fabric.

The deacon stands at the intersection of the Church's liturgy, charity, and proclamation. In each of these dimensions, reparation finds concrete expression. At the altar, the deacon assists in the Eucharistic sacrifice, the supreme act of reparation in which Christ offers Himself to the Father for the salvation of the world. Every time the deacon proclaims the Gospel, prepares the altar, or dismisses the assembly to live what they have received, he participates in this movement of self-gift that heals what sin has wounded.

In works of charity, the deacon encounters Christ hidden in the poor, the sick, the imprisoned, and the forgotten. These encounters are not merely opportunities for service; they are moments of communion in which the deacon stands with Christ in His suffering members. When the deacon listens patiently, accompanies the grieving, or advocates for the marginalized, he offers reparation by loving where love has been absent. His empathy becomes a living response to indifference, a quiet yet powerful contradiction of the world's hardness of heart.

The interior life of the deacon is the wellspring from which such reparation flows. Without sustained prayer and contemplation, service risks becoming functional or detached. In the silence of prayer, the deacon learns to rest his own heart within the Heart of Christ, allowing divine love to heal his wounds and expand his capacity to love others. This interior union enables him to recognize that reparation is often hidden, carried out in fidelity to small duties, perseverance amid fatigue, and patience in misunderstanding.

Reparation also takes shape within the deacon's family life and ordinary responsibilities. As a husband and father, or as a man living faithfully in his state of life, the deacon is called to embody self-giving love in the most intimate of settings. Here, reparation is expressed through forgiveness, fidelity, sacrifice, and presence. In a culture that often trivializes commitment, such quiet faithfulness becomes a powerful witness to the healing love of God.

United to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the deacon learns the posture of availability and trust that characterizes true reparation. Mary teaches the Church to remain with Christ in suffering without fleeing, to hold sorrow within hope, and to offer oneself without reservation. Her maternal intercession sustains the deacon as he seeks to live his vocation with humility and perseverance.

In a world marked by division, violence, and spiritual indifference, the Church's call to reparation is not a retreat into pious isolation but a summons to deeper engagement rooted in love. The deacon, by virtue of his sacramental configuration, stands as a living sign of this call. His life proclaims that love is stronger than sin, that service heals wounds, and that fidelity in small things participates in God's redemptive plan.

May deacons, then, embrace reparation not as a burden but as a grace. By uniting their lives to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, may they allow divine love to shape their interior lives and overflow into generous service. In doing so, they will not only repair what has been broken but will reveal to the world the enduring tenderness of Christ the Servant, whose Heart remains open for all.

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