

## **Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary- Patroness of Diocese**

In the olden times when we did not have calculators, computers and google search, teachers used to say their students “remember it by heart”. So the students had to remember all the mathematical formulas, chemical equations, multiplication table different laws of physics, proverbs of language and poems etc. by heart. I think most of you might have gone through the period of remember by heart in your school years. I have no idea if the students of today need to remember anything by heart. Probably not, because they can get the answers easily by Google. Did you ever wonder why the teachers said remember by heart and not said remember by mind. Of course, this could be considered just an idiom or way of saying to remember something word by word.

Yes, perhaps heart is the most essential element of human existence. Once the heart dies we die. That is why even after brain dead, people continue to live. Because of this importance of heart the Egyptians, carefully preserved the heart before mummification where as they removed brain and discarded.

This Sunday we celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary who is the patroness of our diocese. When the diocese of Jefferson City was established by Pope Pius XII in 1956 by bifurcating it from the Archdiocese of St. Louis and diocese of Kansas City – St. Joseph, the first bishop- Bishop Marling dedicated this new diocese to the care of Immaculate Heart of Mary. You may be aware that Our Lady of Guadalupe is patroness of Americas and Immaculate Conception is Patroness of USA.

So, each year we celebrate this feast with solemnity. Whereas for the universal church it is a memorial which fall right after the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The closeness of the two celebrations shows how the heart of Mary to be close to the heart of her Son.

The traditional image of the heart of Jesus is of a pierced heart, a heart that has suffered because of love.

The heart of Mary is also a pierced heart. When Jesus was presented in the Temple, Simeon said to Mary, “a sword will pierce your own soul too.” Mary, like her Son, knew the pain that love brings, as is clear from today’s gospel. When the child Jesus went missing, Mary and Joseph went looking for him.

The gospel reading captures the pain of loss, which is every parent's pain, and the pain of everyone who has ever loved someone deeply. Jesus' words to Mary when she eventually found him, "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" showed that even at a young age Jesus was given over to a greater purpose than Mary and Joseph's purpose for him. Mary had to learn to let Jesus go even as a child. More painfully she had to learn to let him go as an adult as he hung from the cross. Yet Mary could do that because her own heart was given over to God; that is what we mean by referring to her Immaculate Heart. If our own heart is given over to God and God's purpose for our lives, we too will come to know when and how to let go of those we love.

Heart Immaculate Heart of Mary is symbol of her love to God when she said Thy will be done. It also is symbol of her maternal love to her son as she stood by his side even at the foot of the cross. And through her son Jesus, immaculate Heart of Mary is also symbol of her maternal love to all of us as we are adopted children of God and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ.

Historically, this devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary grew up in parallel, but at a lesser intensity than that of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, only starting to become more prominent during the time of St John Eudes

The main difference between the devotions to the Two Hearts of Jesus and Mary is that the Sacred Heart of Jesus emphasizes His divine heart as being full of love for humankind, while devotion to Mary's Immaculate Heart is essentially concerned with the love that her heart has for Jesus, our God and Savior. Therefore, Mary's heart is meant to be a model for the way we should love God. She is the only human person who is able to fully and really love God in the way that He should be loved since her heart is immaculate which means sinless.

As we struggle with Covid 19 as well as social and political upheaval due to the America's Original Sin of Racism let's try to make our hearts immaculate after the Immaculate Heart of Mary full of love for God and full of love for all human beings regardless of external differences.