



Reflection:

January 2025

The Jubilee Year 2025, themed Pilgrims of Hope, invites us to contemplate the inexhaustible love of Christ. Pope Francis, in his recent encyclical *Dilexit Nos*, anchors this jubilee in the profound truth expressed in Romans 8 : 37, 39 : He loved us, and nothing can separate us from that love. This love, radiating from the Sacred Heart of Jesus, calls humanity not only to experience divine affection but also to reflect it in our interactions with one another.

The Love of the Sacred Heart

In *Dilexit Nos*, Pope Francis reminds us that the Sacred Heart of Jesus is a beacon of divine-human love. This love is not abstract but tangible, embracing our brokenness, suffering, and longing. The Holy Father reflects on the humanity of Christ, whose love led Him to the Cross, not as a symbol of defeat but as the ultimate act of sacrificial love. He emphasizes, “Nothing can separate us from that love.” This assurance invites us to live in trust, even amid personal trials and global challenges.

A Heartless World: A Call for Renewal

Pope Francis laments the growing prevalence of “heartless” men and women in today’s world, characterized by indifference, conflict, and division. He draws on the depiction of Stavrogin, the protagonist in Dostoevsky’s *Demons*, as an example of modern heartlessness. Romano Guardini, reflecting on Stavrogin, describes a person devoid of empathy, consumed by self-centeredness, and incapable of meaningful connection. The Pope echoes this concern, urging us to ask: “Do I have a heart?” (DN, No. 24). This poignant question challenges us to examine our capacity for compassion, selflessness, and solidarity in an increasingly fragmented world.

The Sacred Heart, a symbol of divine compassion, serves as a remedy for this ailment. It calls us to embody Christ’s love in our daily lives, becoming channels of healing and reconciliation. Pope Francis insists that this love must flow both vertically – connecting us with God – and horizontally – binding us to one another (DN, No. 163). It is this dual movement of love that transforms communities and fosters hope.

Synodality: Walking Together in Love

The recently concluded Synod on Synodality resonates deeply with the message of *Dilexit Nos*. The term “synod,” derived from the Greek *syn-hodos* (walking together), encapsulates the essence of Christian life. Synodality is not merely a structural reform but a spiritual journey of mutual listening, discernment, and collaboration. It reflects the communal nature of the Church as a family of believers united in Christ’s love.

Pope Francis has emphasized that listening to one another is an act of love, requiring humility, openness, and a willingness to embrace diversity. The Synod challenges us to break down barriers of exclusion and indifference, fostering a culture of encounter. In this way, the Church becomes a living witness to the inclusive love of Christ, where all are valued and no one is left behind.

Pilgrims of Hope

As we prepare for Jubilee 2025, we are called to be Pilgrims of Hope. Hope is not a passive sentiment but an active commitment to building a better future. It is rooted in the assurance of Christ’s love, which empowers us to face challenges with courage and resilience. This hope invites us to see the Sacred Heart as a source of renewal, inspiring us to transform our relationships, communities, and the world.

The Path Ahead

In a world scarred by conflicts, political tensions, and wars, the message of *Dilexit Nos* is a timely reminder of what it means to have a heart. The Jubilee Year challenges us to reconnect with the love of Christ, which alone has the power to heal the wounds of humanity. By embracing the call to “walk together” in synodality, we can become instruments of God’s love, radiating hope in a heartless world.

As pilgrims on this journey, let us heed the words of Pope Francis and ask ourselves daily: Do I have a heart? Let us respond by living out the love we have received, walking together as disciples united in faith, hope, and love. Only then can we truly become Pilgrims of Hope in a world longing for the touch of the Sacred Heart.

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