



**Happy Anniversary!** And thank you to all of you whose faithfulness and whose belief in God's faithfulness have brought us to this place and this time in our history, a time when we are able to look back with wonder and awe and gratitude on what GNSH have been doing and who we have been for 90 years, a time, perhaps more importantly, when we are able to review the graces of these 90 years and so be able to imagine with eyes of faith and trust what the present graces and those of the future will be.

I brought with me today the statue of the Sacred Heart that my parents gave me. My mother was very wonderful (as those of you who knew her know) and also very wise. Knowing me, she wrote on the bottom and taped over the writing so that I would not forget – Sister Michael Eileen from Mom and Dad June 24, 1965. It is her own distinctive handwriting, so the love comes through quite powerfully to me when I read it.

We don't have God's handwriting. But we have the Word; the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us. This feast celebrates a spirituality of the Heart, a spirituality of God's compassion made somehow divinely human. It celebrates symbolically the love story between Jesus and his Father and between us and Jesus, and the love shared among us.

Father George Aschenbrenner, a Jesuit priest, wrote in 1988 that contemplative transformation into the beloved is the fundamental process involved in devotion to the Sacred Heart. He says it IS devotion to the Sacred Heart. Let me repeat that – contemplative transformation into the beloved, that is Jesus Christ and all our sisters and brothers, especially the most suffering ones, IS devotion to the Sacred Heart.

Isn't that really our whole 90-year history as Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart? Every child we taught to read; every elderly woman we visited; every dying man whose hand we held; every frantic parent we counseled; every orphaned infant we held; every prisoner we comforted, every legislator we challenged or supported on behalf of those made poor – Each one and all represent our striving to become God's heart for the world. As we say in our Constitutions, *"Individually and communally, we strive to put on the mind and heart of Jesus"*

In the gospel, we hear Jesus pray, *"I give praise to you Father . . . for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to little ones."* This could make us very nervous – we Grey Nuns are so well educated! Some would even say we are wise and learned!

What has qualified so many of you, however, as the "little ones" to whom God reveals what matters, is our life of contemplation, our life of prayer, our life of community and service, our life of longing for and begging God, and helping one another to keep deep within us the heart and mind of Jesus. That Jesus is the one who forgave, included the excluded, challenged the unjust – That Jesus is the one who is fully human, who would not stop doing or saying what he was doing and saying, even when he knew he would be killed for it. This heart, this **Sacred Heart**, calls us to be transformed into his inner dispositions. And it takes a lifetime to do this, a lifetime to really get it – *"My yoke is easy; my burden is light"*

Most of us have learned – and I am certain that some of our holiest Grey Nun ancestors learned, too – that if we fail to turn to Jesus, we will sink like Peter. The hatred and selfishness and harm that we recognize in the world we live in has its little pieces within us, and only by coming to Jesus – heavily burdened – can we find the respite and rest we need.

*“The Lord set his heart on you and chose you. . .because God loved you and because of his fidelity”*

St. Marguerite, and Mother Bruyere, and Mother Augustine, and a whole slew of incredible women on whose shoulders we stand, understood this. They knew because they were open to grace – that we aren’t chosen for being bigger or better or smarter or braver or holier, but just because we are loved.

*“In this is love – not that we have loved God but that he loved us, and so we must love one another”*  
writes John.

Today’s spirituality of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is not so much about novenas and First Fridays and promises or even about the way of reparation.

The Sacred Heart invites us today to realize the immensity of God’s love for the whole world, to beg God to help us be so transformed by contemplation of Jesus that our heart becomes global – wide enough to embrace the world.

Reparation today is about seeing the suffering caused by greed, jealousy and indifference with the eyes of Christ and then doing something about it, doing all we can about it. And when we cannot do anything more about it, we are called to be there, to accompany those who are suffering.

At the Last Supper, the disciple whom Jesus loved is described as leaning on Jesus’ breast. You know if you have held a baby at your breast or a loved one, that the person you hold hears your heart beating. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to have that kind of intimate relationship with Jesus – through scripture, through the scripture of our own story and its joys and sorrows and those of the people who touch our lives.

-Hearing the very heartbeat of Jesus, we find that we can love one another.

-Hearing the heartbeat of Christ, we can stop imagining that we’ve done enough, when we’ve only just begun to work for justice and peace and the healing of the earth.

-Hearing the heartbeat of Jesus, we can begin to accept our aging, our sickness, our limitations, and our sinfulness, knowing that the compassionate heart of Christ is patient and rich in mercy.

We are so blessed. We share among us the mind and heart of Jesus. For 90 years, he has been calling us to be, in imitation of him, the compassion of God, the human face of God.

My mother’s handwriting on my statue of the Sacred Heart has reminded me for 46 years of where I first learned about being loved and loving. May the Heart of Christ continue to teach us to be God’s compassion for our needy world.