



# Sacred Fire: Practicing Devotion to the Heart of Jesus

*Philip Bulman*

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On the night before He died, Jesus called His disciples to abide in Him. This startling invitation to an intimate relationship with God is a great gift to all generations. The devotion to the Sacred Heart gives Catholics a practical way to respond to this invitation. Each of us can experience the love of Jesus in a way that transforms our own hearts. Sacred Fire illuminates the rich scriptural roots of the Sacred Heart devotion and recounts how it has evolved through the centuries. More importantly, it provides steps anyone can take to experience the infinite blessings of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Embracing the Sacred Heart devotion brings the believer into a dynamic, personal relationship with Jesus. Lukewarm souls become fervent, and fervent souls enjoy ever greater blessings of Divine Mercy that begin in this life and last for all eternity.

## **Sacred Fire: Practicing Devotion to the Heart of Jesus Details**

Date : Published June 23rd 2014 by Laudate Press

ISBN : 9780990325802

Author : Philip Bulman

Format : Paperback 352 pages

Genre : Christianity, Catholic, Spirituality



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## From Reader Review Sacred Fire: Practicing Devotion to the Heart of Jesus for online ebook

### Rachel Parrott says

"Sacred Fire" is a beautiful introduction to the Devotion to the Heart of Jesus and many saints key to its development.

My copy came as a gift from Goodreads First Reads.

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### Gil Michelini says

*The author gave me a copy of this book to review*

I have heard of the Sacred Heart many times and have seen the painting of Christ pointing to His burning heart but it wasn't until I read Sacred Fire: Practicing Devotion To The Heart Of Jesus by Philip Michael Bulman did I understand what those paintings were about and the significance of the devotion in understanding Christ.

#### Weak Beginning

I know it's not considered good form to start with weaknesses of the book but since the weakest part of the book is the first chapter it seems to make sense in this case.

Bulman says in the introduction "long book introductions are usually boring, so I simply urge the reader to approach this text prayerfully." The author makes the assumption that all Catholics have the same fundamental understand of the Sacred Heart that he does. In this case, even a short overview of the book would have been helpful.

I found Chapter 1 – The Pierced Heart the weakest chapter of this book. With his incorrect belief of the level of understanding of the majority of lay Catholics, the author miss a chance to whet the appetite of the reader to the abundant treasure awaiting them in Christ's Sacred Heart. Had I not promised the author I would review this book, I would have stopped after the first chapter as it is a historical timeline to the evolution of the Sacred Heart devotion that makes sense to those with a fundamental knowledge of the devotion.

I'm glad I did make that promise because the book is wonderful after the first chapter.

#### Always Good To Learn More About The Saints

Starting in chapter two, the author talks about five saints who have been involved in the development of the Sacred Heart devotion.

Chapter two is given to Saint Gertrude the Great who Jesus spoke to initially about the Sacred Heart devotion. I never knew there was a Saint Gertrude or that she was all that Great but she left us several writing with what Christ told her. This insights would later lead to the approval of the Sacred Heart devotion, but not until centuries later.

Chapter three is dedicated to Saint Margaret Mary, commonly known as the Apostle of the Devotion to the

Sacred Heart of Jesus. The author attends a parish named in Saint Margaret Mary's honor which is what started his interest in the Sacred Heart devotion. He refers back to this chapter later in the book when discussing how to practice this devotion.

Chapter four takes us up Mount Carmel where we learn how the Sacred Heart devotion was being practiced among Carmelites. The author gives several examples of how the devotion spread over the centuries among various Carmelites. There is an amazing story of faith I had never heard of about Carmelites during the French Revolution. He follows a group of sisters who went to the guillotine rather than follow many others in France as they turned its back on their rich Christian heritage. The author ends this chapter by looking at the writings of Saint Therese of Lisieux to better understand her devotion to the Sacred Heart.

Chapter five looks at another Carmelite from my side of the world. Saint Teresa of the Andes had regular conversations with Jesus from her early childhood. It struck her as odd that other people didn't have this same relationship with Christ. The author fleshes out of Saint Teresa's writings of her strong devotion to the Sacred Heart.

The final chapter in the first part concerns one of my favorite saints and devotions. While Saint Faustina does not specifically talk about a devotion to the Sacred Heart, she references the heart of Christ many times in her Diary: Divine Mercy in My Soul. The author uses several sections from the diary to draw the conclusion that Christ's desire that we focus on His divine mercy is a product of the richness found in his Sacred Heart.

While off to a weak start, I thought the first part of the book was informative and enlightening in learning about the five saints, in particular what Christ told them about the importance of the richness and mercy that he wants to offer us from His Sacred Heart.

#### Nuts and Bolts

The second part of the book is really the heart of understanding the devotion to the Sacred Heart. While I always appreciate learning more about the saints, I found this to be the better part of the book.

Chapter seven is entitled The Eucharist and the author uses insight of the saints and his own personal experience to help the reader see that Mass is actually a devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I enjoy the practical insight of the attitude that we should have before and during Mass. I particularly liked the author's idea of praying before Mass for the priest as he is about to do the most amazing function any human being can do.

Chapter eight is a detailed study of The Litany of the Sacred Heart as approved by Pope Leo XIII in 1899. The author takes each sentence of the litany and presents Scriptural support. For those who enjoy praying this litany, you'll find this chapter enlightening.

Chapter nine, entitled The Reparation to the Sacred Heart is where the author presents a strong case on why regular reception of the sacrament of reconciliation is critical in helping us grow into the people Christ wants us to become. I found his insight on that Catholic cliché of "offer it up" helpful, as well as a unique viewpoint of what happened that night in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Chapter 10 is a Scripture study of references to God's heart. An interesting study in developing a better understanding of the Father as most of the references are from the Hebrew Scriptures, and then seeing how Christ expands on these in the Christian Scriptures.

The final chapter deals with The Promises of the Sacred Heart. The author presents the 12 promises

traditionally associated with the devotion to the Sacred Heart with an examination of the writings of Saint Margaret Mary to find exactly where these promises come from. He then ties Saint Margaret Mary's insight with Scripture.

The author wraps up the book with a detailed bibliography of other works related to the Sacred Heart.

#### Recommendation

I would recommend Sacred Fire for those wanting to learn about the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. There are some inconsistent formatting throughout the book and I would suggest skipping the first chapter but other than those, it will be a valuable part of learning more about our amazing King.

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#### **Melanie Rigney says**

This is a lovely, thoughtful book. It's clear Mr. Bulman has a passion for the Sacred Heart devotion. He's done a significant amount of research, and shares what he's learned in an accessible yet knowledgeable way. As someone who writes frequently about Catholic women saints, I was very impressed and enjoyed this book very much. The author gave me a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. My only quibble is that the font choice made it a bit tiring to read at long stretches.

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#### **Coleen says**

Ever since I can remember as a child, the devotion to the Sacred Heart was paramount. The photos in the home, the litanies, etc. So when I had the opportunity to win this copy, I was excited. The book did not disappoint. Although I did not read it in order from the beginning to end, the reason was that there were parts that I wanted to read right away: the promises of the sacred heart; the litany of the sacred heart. But the history and explanation of Saint Margaret Mary and Saint Gertrude, which I returned to read, were also interesting. Definitely worth reading for anyone with this devotion.

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#### **Rebecca says**

(I received a copy due to the generosity of the author through Goodreads First Reads)

From the moment I opened the book I knew that this book was written with love and devotion. I am a Catholic convert, but I was born in Catholic hospital named Sacred Heart. The mystery of Faith to me is beautiful, it's a sense that I encountered while reading this title. I found it to be a bit intense but in a good way, I found myself to be doing quite a bit of soul searching. The author uses language which is very communicable (if you ever attempted to read Benedict XVI the language is intense-basically meant for theologians which I am not) The book is perfect for reading during Adoration. Strongly recommend.

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### **Chris says**

I received this book as part of GoodReads First Reads giveaway.

On the one hand, this book is interesting and helpful to read. The first part introduces us to a few saints influential in the spread of the devotion to Jesus' heart. The second part goes more into the practice side, including scriptural bases for the devotion, devotion to the Eucharist and blessings from the devotion. The scriptural basis was especially interesting. Though I wish that the quotations in the book did a better job of citing sources. There's a bibliography in the back but nothing tying a quote in the text to the bibliography. Makes targeted further reading difficult but alas.

I have some personal misgivings because the first half just weirded me out. Maybe I'm just not particularly spiritual but when a saint starts talking about drinking from the side of Jesus and dwelling in His wounds I start thinking that sainthood might be too weird for me to attain. C'est la vie.

Not a real criticism I suppose but I'm walking away from this one feeling more weirded out by Catholicism than usual.

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### **Sweetpea says**

I received a free copy of this book from the GoodReads First Reads program in exchange for an honest review. An interesting read, although I'm not sure that I agreed with everything in the book.

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### **Tony says**

Full Disclosure: I won this book in a Goodreads Giveaway. Now that that's out of the way...

When I finished this book, the first thing I thought was, "Wow. What a triumph of editing." I kid you not. Even though the book was fascinating look into the devotion to the Sacred Heart, and even though I have a new desire to start this devotion, the first thought I had after finishing this book had to do with how this book was structured. Call me crazy. I would.

In all seriousness, though, this book is a valuable resource for anyone interested in this devotion. Reviewing this book is more akin to having to review two different, albeit related, books, because the first section is more of a history book, whereas the second section is more like a biblically-supported "user's guide" to the devotion; a reference book, if you will. I have my thoughts on both, but I feel it is important to make known that these sections are different enough that they need to be discussed separately. The book is, for the most part, incredibly well organized, and you can at once tell that Bulman spent countless hours assembling pieces from this source and that source to create a historical record that flows like a well-crafted piece of fiction.

A lot of times writings from saints are too dense for me, but the author does a wonderful job of weaving many key pieces from these writings with his own to create a book that is both informative and readable. This is primarily what the first half of the book is like. Bulman covers the lives of several saints, all of whom have a place in the spread of the devotion of the Sacred Heart. Each chapter serves as a sort of biography for each person, and it is incredibly fascinating to see each saint's perspective, as without them I feel like the significance of this devotion would be lost. I am glad that Bulman was able to so eloquently incorporate both elements together into his book.

All this being said, I *do* feel like Bulman went a bit overboard with the quotes and passages in places. In the second portion of the book, which goes over in depth the method to the devotion and the sources for the devotion's prayers and litanies, it feels more like he didn't write a book as much as he collected a lot of Bible passages and quotations from each saint. This is fine, but in places I felt like skipping portions because I wanted to get back to the meat and potatoes of the book. A lot of this latter material is information that can easily be found online, but having it all included here is convenient, and adds to the value of the book's first part.

There is a whole chapter devoted to the scriptural foundations of the devotion. Each biblical quote is discussed in depth, which I think to most people would be appealing, but the chapter becomes at times a discussion on the biblical sources surrounding the nature of God and his mercy and his willingness to bless His people. A good read to be sure, but one that I think loses its footing a bit and falls away from the reason we're all here: to learn about the Sacred Heart and the devotion thereto. Some of the Bible verses quoted later on during the discussion of the Litany seem irrelevant and unnecessary.

If there is one thing I would change though, it's simply to rename "Chapter One" to "Introduction." It's basically a summary of everything the reader will find in the rest of the book. Having it listed as "Chapter One" is slightly confusing, and it makes more sense for it to be separate from the rest of the book.

A book succeeds if it is able to get an emotion out of the reader. Typically this is in the form of excitement, or joy, or sadness, or even disgust. This book not only brought me a deeper interest in the Sacred Heart, but it also filled me with a sense of determination to start this devotion for myself, which is a lot considering this book could aptly be described as a reference book, and also because I don't usually have a desire to do much of anything. This book goes into much detail regarding the spread of the devotion, and hearing these stories recounted in this book fascinated me. Learning about what devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus does for a person made me feel like I was missing out on all the blessings it has to offer.

I immensely liked this book, and I would recommend this to anyone interested in the Sacred Heart, whether, like me, you are interested in where devotions like that of the Sacred Heart comes from, or if you're already on board with the idea of this devotion and you want a definitive guide to how to add it to your own spiritual life. I've already marked several sections of this book, and it's ready to accompany me to adoration. I plan to keep it with me for a good long while. Please give this book a read.

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