

**Homily for the Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
Mass with Totus Tuus Missionaries
Villa Maria Retreat Center
Springfield, Illinois**

June 28, 2025

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

It is good to be with you to celebrate this Mass for the Totus Tuus Missionaries on this Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. As we know, the name *Totus Tuus* comes from the motto of Pope St. John Paul II. It is a Latin phrase meaning “Totally Yours” and signifies our desire to give ourselves entirely to Jesus Christ through Mary, so it is fitting that we celebrate this Mass honoring the Immaculate Heart of Mary as we pledge ourselves to Mary that we are *Totus Tuus*.

Devotion to Our Lady’s purity of heart began to flower beginning in the Middle Ages, but St. John Eudes, a 17th-century French priest, popularized this devotion with his great love of the Blessed Mother. After the 1830 apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Paris, which gave rise to the Miraculous Medal, efforts were renewed to have devotion to the Immaculate Heart instituted as a feast for the universal Church. In this

Marian apparition, Our Lady showed St. Catherine Labouré an image of a medal to be struck which would obtain many graces for those who wore it faithfully, especially the grace of conversion for sinners.

On the front of the medal was an image of Our Lady encircled with the words, *O Mary, Conceived Without Sin, Pray for Us Who Have Recourse to Thee*, confirming the dogma of her Immaculate Conception. On the reverse was an image of the Cross of Christ surmounted by the letter "M", and underneath it the symbols of Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary side-by-side, thus confirming the devotion to her holy heart.

The spreading popularity of the Miraculous Medal soon gave rise to a Marian confraternity established in Paris in 1836 and quickly spread all over the world. Then, in 1855, the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary was approved by the Vatican, however, without establishing it for the universal Church.

Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary rose to a new level after the apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima. In her visitations to Lucia, Jacinta, and Francisco, Our Lady revealed a vision of her Immaculate Heart encircled with thorns which represented the many sins committed against her.

After the apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima, the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary was instituted for the universal Church by Pope Pius XII in 1944. The feast was originally celebrated on August 22nd, the octave day of the Solemnity of the Assumption. It was later moved to the Saturday following the feast of the Sacred Heart, so that the Two Hearts would appear side-by-side, Friday and Saturday, on the liturgical calendar. August 22nd was then made the feast of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary, connecting the Assumption to her reign in heaven (the 4th and 5th Glorious Mysteries of the Holy Rosary).¹

The last encyclical letter of Pope Francis before his death was on the theme of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Issued on the 24th of October of 2024, the encyclical letter bears the title in Latin, *Dilexit nos*, which means, “He loved us,” as Saint Paul says of Christ in his *Letter to the Romans* (cf. *Rom* 8:37). The encyclical letter begins with a section on the importance of the heart, which is pertinent for our consideration in relation both to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Pope Francis wrote:

2. The symbol of the heart has often been used to express the love of Jesus Christ. Some have questioned whether this symbol is still meaningful today. Yet living as we do in an age of superficiality, rushing frenetically from one thing to another without really knowing why, and ending up as insatiable consumers and slaves to the mechanisms of a market unconcerned about the deeper meaning of our lives, all of us need to rediscover the importance of the heart.

3. In classical Greek, the word *kardía* denotes the inmost part of human beings, animals and plants. For Homer, it indicates not only the center of the body, but also the human soul and spirit. In the *Iliad*, thoughts and feelings proceed from the heart and are closely bound one to another. The heart appears as the locus of desire and the place where important decisions take shape. In Plato, the heart serves, as it were, to unite the rational and instinctive aspects of the person, since the impulses of both the higher faculties and the passions were thought to pass through the veins that converge in the heart. From ancient times, then, there has been an appreciation of the fact that human beings are not simply a sum of different skills, but a unity of body and soul with a coordinating center that provides a backdrop of meaning and direction to all that a person experiences.

4. The Bible tells us that, “the Word of God is living and active... it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the

heart” (*Heb 4:12*). In this way, it speaks to us of the heart as a core that lies hidden beneath all outward appearances, even beneath the superficial thoughts that can lead us astray. The disciples of Emmaus, on their mysterious journey in the company of the risen Christ, experienced a moment of anguish, confusion, despair and disappointment. Yet, beyond and in spite of this, something was happening deep within them: “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road?” (*Lk 24:32*).²

Today’s Gospel reading from Saint Luke (*Lk 2:41-51*) about the finding of Jesus in the Temple concludes with the line, “His mother kept all these things in her heart.” In the Collect at the beginning of this Mass, we prayed, “O God, who prepared a fit dwelling place for the Holy Spirit in the Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, graciously grant that through her intercession we may be a worthy temple of your glory.”

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ Gretchen Filz, “What You Should Know About the Immaculate Heart of Mary,” *The Catholic Company*, August 28, 2018, accessed online at <https://www.catholiccompany.com/blogs/magazine/devotion-immaculate-heart-mary-6227>.

² <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/20241024-enciclica-dilexit-nos.html>