

## June: the Month of the Sacred Heart

The human heart is a symbol in the Western world of love (as witnessed by the proliferation of gift hearts of many descriptions on Valentine's Day). In the rich and living symbol of the Sacred Heart we find presented for our consideration the overwhelming love of Jesus for us, a love that alone can explain His life, words and actions. As such, this symbol has had a powerful attraction for devotion in the Catholic Church. The devotion of Sister Dolores Armer to the mysteries of Christ's love and compassion reveals itself often in her writings, both formal and informal. She addresses prayers to the Sacred Heart, she alludes to its power in her life, in the conferences that she gives to the Sisters and in her perceptions of God's activity in the world.

*"If you would sacrifice and give yourself entirely to Him when He comes to you in Holy Communion, as He has given Himself entirely to you, what a different soul you would soon become...."*

*The best Thanksgiving is the faithful and entire abandonment of yourself and all your interests, desires and affections to Him Who gives Himself so marvelously, lovingly and confidingly to you."*



In 1893, when the Sisters first Motherhouse was constructed at the corner of Hayes and Fillmore Streets in San Francisco, the decoration of the chapel was the subject of long and involved discussion and planning. The chapel was to have stained glass windows, and Sister Dolores and the community were in accord - one of the windows should depict the image of the Sacred Heart. It was determined that the subject matter of the image would present St. Margaret Mary Alacoque of France receiving her vision of the love of Jesus manifested in the image of his heart. The Meyers Company of Germany was the art glass manufacturer who received the commission for the windows, and the photograph of the window that accompanies this article shows the beautiful presentation of Margaret Mary's story as prepared by the German artists.

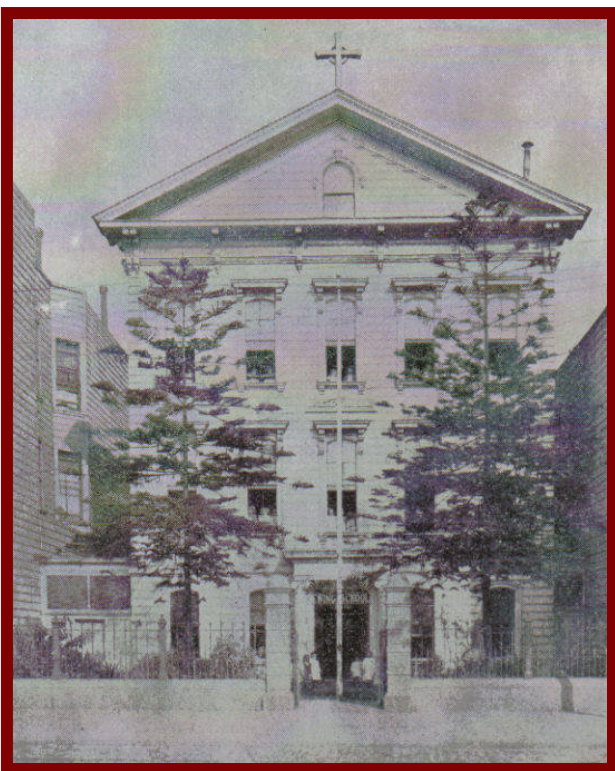


Another picture that accompanies this short article is a photo of the life-sized statue of the Sacred Heart that stood in a special niche in the hall immediately outside the chapel. An entry in the Community Annals for September 18, 1896 reads:

*“An exquisite statue of the Sacred Heart arrived from Paris, the gift of Mrs. Tobin in memory of her departed husband. A niche is to be cut in the wall of the Chapel hall for it.” Mr. Richard Tobin was, of course, Sister Dolores’ beloved stepfather.*

The Motherhouse was in Sacred Heart Parish, and one of the earliest Day Homes was also called Sacred Heart. The mystery of Jesus’ love for us, manifested in this rich symbol, surrounded much of the Sisters’ early work, in which they strove to pass on to the marginalized poor of their San Francisco the assurance of the love and care in which the compassionate God looked upon them. The attitude of Christ, himself, as well as those who strive to follow his example in a life of giving is summed up for us nicely in a little thought Sister Dolores jotted down in 1876.

*“And I saw the river which must be passed in order to reach the Kingdom of Heaven and the name of that river was suffering. And I saw the boat which takes so many souls across the river and the name of that boat was love.”*



*Sacred Heart Day Home circa 1893, Hayes St., San Francisco, California*

