

OCTOBER 20 2025 FATHER HENK VAN MEIJEL

Our Gospel reading really pulls us down to the fundamental question: Where am I called? What are my priorities in life? It's so easy, especially in our secular world, to be drawn to all the material—to have the latest phone, the biggest car, and all of that. But often, when we get sick, and especially when terminal illness hits us, then things change, and all our accomplishments and whatever—it doesn't mean that much anymore.

Sometimes you hear people talking about the past, talking about all the glory they had—but it's all gone. One thing is for sure: it doesn't matter if you have billions of dollars or how famous one was, it all means nothing in the end, because in the end you can't take it with you. You can have two registered nurses at your side, and a doctor if you can afford it—and some people can afford that kind of expense in the later days of their life—but it doesn't matter. God will call you home, whether you like it or not.

It's so foundational, and yet so many people are scared of going home, of dying, because we have to leave the material behind. We have to leave the seen world behind and go to the unknown. But it's really nothing to be scared about. We have the body of saints and all those revelations which show us the way to God. So we are called to live by faith.

The first reading from Romans is very much about living by faith. As Saint Paul recalls Abraham, who was empowered by faith, we see how God made things happen—and how God also works through each one of us, through people we least expect.

In our Psalm today, we have the Canticle of Zechariah, who prophesied after Saint John was born. The neighbours and people wanted to know what the name of the newborn was. He said, “John.” And after that, he could speak—a miracle showing how God works through us.

Today, we also celebrate Margaret Mary Alacoque, who is known for the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Her confessor, Claude de la Colombière, a Jesuit, truly believed in her. This devotion to the Sacred Heart actually goes way back, before Margaret Mary in the 17th century—even to the time of Saint Francis, in the 11th or 12th century. The heart of Jesus, the pierced heart of love, is something that developed over time.

Margaret Mary had a fascinating story. She was healed of rheumatic fever as a child, and she promised to enter religious life and give her life to God. As she grew older, living in a material world, Jesus reminded her—while she was at a dance—that she had made a commitment to Him and that He loved her and had a task for her. So she entered the Visitation Sisters at age 24, which was quite old at that time.

Between 1673 and 1675, she had visions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Jesus came to her and revealed many things. Of course, her community thought she was “cuckoo,” and often these things have to be discerned carefully. But her confessor, Claude de la Colombière, believed in her and became the greatest promoter of her visions.

When God is at work, it is hard to put words on it. Sometimes people tell me, “God spoke to me.” We must be careful with such claims, discerning them prayerfully—but sometimes, you just know that God truly spoke to someone. That is not uncommon. God spoke to Margaret Mary, and the beauty of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is that it reveals the pierced, loving heart of God—a God who loves each one of us, whether we like it or not.

He is a God who suffered for us, crowned with thorns, marked and beaten, yet radiating flames of mercy from His Sacred Heart. There are many interpretations of this image, but it is a rich symbol to pray with—to sit before, to meditate upon, and to let God speak through.

On a larger level, it is first about God. As Jesuits, in our spiritual exercises, when someone comes for a 30-day silent retreat, one of the prayers I often assign is to pray with a vision of the Trinity—God looking at the earth, seeing how it is so broken, with wars, disputes between nations and families, and the messiness of human life. To grieve with the world. Yet, even through that, God’s love and mercy are at work.

We can also sit with the Sacred Heart and recall our own suffering—how we try to love our enemies, to love those family members we struggle with, or those we live with, perhaps in a community or a nursing home. Those we find hard to love are also loved by God. We are called to appreciate that people are different, even when that’s not easy for us.

As we pray with these things, as we pray with the suffering of Jesus, we build treasures in the kingdom of God, not in earthly things—because earthly treasures, in the end, mean absolutely nothing. They just fade away. And we so often forget these things.

Amen.