

Faith Director

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SACRED HEART of JESUS



The above image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is circulating through the 5 dioceses of Indiana. We started circulating this icon in March 2025, and now each district has had an opportunity to host the ICON in your parishes. These icons will continue to be available through 2026; I have requested each Diocesan Chairman continue to schedule with the district deputies so that all councils will have another opportunity to host a Pilgrim Icon service for their parishes. The comment below is made by the Supreme Knight Partick Kelly.

When we think of the human heart, we call to mind the admirable qualities of love and devotion, as well as courage, faithfulness and sacrifice. When we think of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we see all these virtues and many others raised to perfection. At the same time, the image of the Sacred Heart is not intimidating; rather, it draws us toward itself. Though perfect, Our Lord's heart remains a human heart, and an accessible bridge between God and humanity. For centuries, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has been central in the life of the Church, focusing on the divine love of our Savior expressed in the familiar human qualities of the heart. As the Knights of Columbus launches its new Pilgrim Icon Program centered on the Sacred Heart, we see a providential confluence of events. It comes amid the steady expansion of our

Cor initiative, which takes its name from the Latin word for heart and invites every Knight to deepen his charity through a more intentional life of prayer, formation and fraternity. In October 2024, Pope Francis issued his fourth encyclical, (He Loved Us), which is focused on the Sacred Heart of Jesus and resonates perfectly with the Cor initiative and our mission as Knights. Pope Francis writes, “St. John Henry Newman took as his motto the phrase Cor ad cor loquitur, since, beyond all our thoughts and ideas, the Lord saves us by speaking to our hearts from his Sacred Heart”. The Holy Father also notes, “In union with Christ, amid the ruins we have left in this world by our sins, we are called to build a new civilization of love”. In many ways, his fourth encyclical can serve as a mission statement for the Knights of Columbus in today’s world. The pope observes that we live in a fragmented and divided society, but the heart of Christ is a unifying center. It is the source of truth and goodness that we all need. The Holy Father’s encyclical and our new Pilgrim Icon Program both coincide with the Church’s commemoration of the 350th anniversary of the visions of the Sacred Heart received by the French nun St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, who has given us the Twelve Promises of the Sacred Heart and the First Friday devotions. In one of the apparitions, Our Lord told her: “Behold this Heart which has so loved men that it has spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming itself, in order to testify its love.” There is a strong connection between the Knights of Columbus and devotion to the Sacred Heart, beginning with our Blessed Founder, Father Michael McGivney, who clearly had personal devotion to the Heart of Christ. An image of the Sacred Heart was found among his family’s belongings after his death, so we know he grew up with the devotion, which grew in popularity in the 19th century. Though only 13 letters in his own hand have come down to us, it is significant that he signed one of them, “Yours truly in the S.H.” — an abbreviation for the Sacred Heart. Indeed, the French Jesuit, Vincentian and Sulpician priests who oversaw his seminary formation in Canada and the U.S. all had a devotion to the Heart of Jesus, which they undoubtedly encouraged in Michael McGivney and his seminary confreres. We can see evidence of that devotion in perhaps the most evocative example of McGivney’s priestly ministry — his extraordinary pastoral care for Chip Smith, who approached the gallows accompanied by Father McGivney, with the penitent prisoner wearing a cloth badge of the Sacred Heart, entrusting himself to divine mercy. And, finally, Father McGivney himself was buried with a depiction of the Sacred Heart, which is on display with his burial vestments in the Blessed Michael McGivney Pilgrimage Center in New Haven, Connecticut. The particular image chosen for the Pilgrim Icon is the most famous depiction of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, painted in 1767 by Pompeo Batoni and now venerated in the Church of the Gesù in Rome — the mother church of the Society of Jesus, which evokes the Jesuits’ longstanding resolve “to practice, promote and propagate devotion to His most divine Heart” (23rd General Congregation, Decree 46 – 1883). In Batoni’s beautiful painting, Jesus holds out to us his heart, enflamed with love and wrapped in thorns, so we can meditate on the sacrifice of his passion and be engulfed in his love. Thus, we see that devotion to the Sacred Heart is profound yet simple. It reminds us of

God's love for us and is meant to inspire our love in return. As my brother Knights of Columbus bring reproductions of this beloved image to parishes around the world, I hope that they will invite their families — and all families — to consecrate their homes and themselves to the Sacred Heart. In the heart of Christ, we see the heart of the Father. And we ask Our Lord to help us make his heart our own, so that we may see and love in others what he sees and loves in us.