



# Allocutio



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Allocutio: The Sacred Heart of God's love calls us to love with him.

A question has arisen as to why so many babies died across so many homes in Ireland in the early part of the 20th century. I also know that the many sisters of religion who cared for these were good people as is affirmed by so many still alive who grew up in those homes. So what caused the deaths? We know about the lack of medicine, we know too that many of them were already undernourished by the time they were born. But there is one other factor that has not been factored in and it is something obvious and indeed confirmed by research. And that is the fact that many of them experienced a great absence of love, indeed a sense of rejection.

Many studies around the world have shown the importance of bonding and attachment for the development of infants. If a child even in its mother's womb senses a lack of welcome, or if the mother is suffering the trauma of being rejected by her own family, or resents the very child it is carrying and then wants nothing to do with it once born, that child must suffer a grave deprivation. A child who is well fed but deprived of love will not do as well as a child not so well-fed but who receives much love. How well Jesus said that man does not live on bread alone. What we all need most of all is love, more than food or drink.

But it is not just infants. I have come to realise across life that every person needs love, needs a sense of being welcomed, having a sense of worth and value. How many died once they had a sense of a deep rejection, of being not wanted any more. I heard yesterday of someone who committed suicide because they felt that were just a nuisance. Every person must have it constantly communicated to them that they are of real value, that they are needed and wanted, that we want them with us.

We are celebrating the Feast of the Sacred Heart today/tomorrow. And we are celebrating one special heart who knew how to love but who also had the strength to withstand the betrayals and rejection heaped on him. As scripture says his longing was to be among the sons of men. It was love brought him here, to survive and thrive here and to bring him to share the importance of love among us, crowning everything with his splendid act on the Cross.

We would insult him and do disrespect to his Sacred Heart if we do not take seriously his teachings on love. To us all he says, "Love one another as I have loved you. Love your enemies. Forgive. Welcome the stranger. Do not judge. Do not condemn. Stop looking for specs in your brother's eye. Go and find those planks in your own eye that prevent you seeing with love."

Welcome the stranger. Every human being can become a stranger or feel estranged. The stranger can have a face that puts you off. But it is usually not the face of personal animosity to you but the face of someone who is out of water, who feels unsure. To help



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make them feel at ease, to relax, to be comfortable in company and with themselves, we do a great mission by simply welcoming. It applies to babies, it applies to teenagers, it applies to those society rejects, it applies to the old. How many people suffer guilt because their last encounter before they died with spouse or child or parent was contentious? And you are left wondering did your negative approach contribute?

Every human being from start to finish needs love. But not every human being can give love, at least not immediately. There is that old saying, *nemo dat quod non habet*, you can't give what you ain't got. Our Lord once said, "Beware of those who come to you in sheep's clothing but who inside are ravenous wolves!" What is a ravenous wolf? Yes first a wolf. And you must be careful of well-fed wolves. But a ravenous wolf! Even if you do not provoke him or upset him he may attack. Why? He is so hungry, he is so deprived, he is so in need. People who do not get love can be very needy people and are driven by their needs. They are blown away by deep anxieties, depressions, neuroses, psychoses. Everything they do and say can be driven by the desire to satiate their needs, especially the need to be loved and welcomed and so their capacity to love is diminished, they are limited in their ability for real care of others. And some destroy others in their efforts to deal with their problems. And let us all be humble: we all have aspects of that to us.

How often have I come across young men whose way of talking reminds me of a young child who is crying out for a mother's love, a love he or she never got. I remember the case of man I saw in the Mater A&E who was dealing with the staff and everyone who had ears to hear could hear his cry for help. Or the young man out of prison who clearly was trying to prove himself to me that he was worthy of love.

So many problems go back to our starts. Everything and anything you can do to make children welcome and made feel of value is a huge contribution to life. As Jesus said, "Let the children come to me. To such belongs the Kingdom of God. Anyone who welcomes a child in my name welcomes me!"

The heart of Jesus beats with love for us all. I mentioned the many who have not received love and who seem incapable of passing it on. But at a certain level that is us all. We all have some deficiency in love in us. So on this Feast of the Sacred Heart let us ask Jesus to somehow work another miracle in us that we can somehow grow in real love and become people who will have the capacity to welcome everyone, to make the other person feel important and of value, to give them a sense of belonging, to tell them we need them and that they do good for us.

And oh yes there are the poorest of the poor as Mother Teresa says. They require a heroic effort. But then who was Jesus if not that great hero who risked his all in coming among us and showering that great love he has on us all. Let us beg his help and ask his love to make us with him great lovers.

Amen.

Fr Paul Churchill