

Sacred Heart of Jesus

June Novena 2020 for Maryvale

If you had to name something about Moses, you probably would mention the two tablets, inscribed with the Ten Commandments. I guess fewer would mention that those two tablets were destroyed by Moses as he came down the Mountain and realised the people had made and started worshipping a golden calf?

Shattered tablets. What sadness Moses and the people of God- eventually- must have felt as they surveyed the damage, a symbol of their wrecked lives as they had brought disaster on themselves.

But remember, God always has a plan. St Oscar Romero said 'God is the protagonist of history'. God asked Moses to fashion two new tablets and take them once more up Mount Sinai. Moses trusted that God did have a fresh plan and, more importantly, that it was a plan for renewal. In the scriptures, we read that he did this because 'the Lord is a God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in kindness and faithfulness. In short, God had a *heart* for his people. And that heart - and that heart alone - could remake our shattered hearts.

During this lockdown maybe we have had a few moments of despair at some of our (or others') shattered hopes, shattered promises, shattered dreams. The pandemic has traumatised many lives through suffering, death and bereavement and now we face a possible crushing recession. On top of that, there is agitation within our community as we remember the effects of racism and our divided society. We all need, as much as ever, the healing balm of Christ's love which flows like a waterfall from his Sacred Heart on the cross.

My saint for this lockdown, as we have simply been getting on with our ordinary lives, has been the 20th century Spanish Saint, Josemaria Escriva, '*saint of the ordinary*', as Pope John Paul II called him. Our lives may look very ordinary, but through faith, we can see the *ultimate value* God places on your life. St Josemaria Escriva puts it this way:

'Jesus on the cross, with his heart overflowing with love for man,is a...commentary on the *value of people*...people, their happiness and their life, are *so important* that the very son of God gave himself up to redeem and cleanse and raise them up'

So today, in this novena of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, ponder the overflowing, healing love of Jesus on the cross for you and his love for your loved ones and your real or imagined enemies. As St Margaret Mary said, 'behold the heart that loves so much.'

As we contemplate the Sacred Heart of the Lord, not only do we express sorrow for our own sin, but we *adore* Jesus, because he loves us totally and, as St Augustine said, 'here [on the cross] *was opened wide* the door of life, from which the sacraments of the Church have flowed out.'

As we are spiritually joined this evening to Maryvale, the initial home of St John Henry Newman, let me finish with some encouraging words from him. We know Newman's love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a heart which he described as 'the seat and source of all thy tenderest affection for us sinners...the instrument and organ of thy love.' Then Newman concludes: This sacred heart of Jesus 'did beat for us, it yearned over us. It ached for us and for our salvation.'

Fr Simon Ellis