

Detailed presentation of the symposium

"Repairing the Irreparable"

On 27 December 1673, Jesus appeared to Saint Margaret Mary and revealed to her "the marvels of his love and the inexplicable secrets of his Sacred Heart, which he had always kept hidden until he opened them to her for the first time".¹ Other revelations followed that would shape Margaret Mary's life, establishing her as a "beloved disciple"² of the Sacred Heart, following in the footsteps of the beloved disciple of John's Gospel, and making her a missionary of these revelations. Jesus' main request was the institution of the feast of the Sacred Heart, which became a universal solemnity of the Catholic Church in 1856. The events at Paray-le-Monial had a worldwide and lasting impact. It's no exaggeration to say that devotion to the Sacred Heart, present all over the world, was born in this place.

On 27 December 2023, the Sanctuary of Paray-le-Monial will begin jubilee celebrations marking 350 years since the apparitions. This anniversary will last 1 month, until the Feast of the Sacred Heart in 2025. On this occasion, the Sanctuary wishes to honour its mission of spreading the message of the Sacred Heart by once again organising an international symposium. This will take place in Rome from May 1st – 5th 2024 and will focus on the theme of reparation, under the title: "Repairing the irreparable".

Although this aspect is less well known, the events at Paray-le-Monial can be seen as a reference point for the spirituality of reparation.³ Jesus' request for the institution of the Feast of the Sacred Heart, made during the 'Great Apparition'⁴ of June 4th 1675, was a request for reparation.

The term, absent from the New Testament, appeared relatively late in the history of the Church,⁵ as part of the movement of conversion and penitence induced by the positive response to Christ's call to follow him. In the wake of the events at Paray-le-Monial, reparation was to take pride of place in the spirituality of the Church⁶ until the great anthropological turning point of the 1970s, when it rapidly declined.

So why revisit it or bring it back into fashion?

¹ Saint Margaret Mary, *Sa vie par elle-même*, § 53.

² Saint Margaret Mary, *Sa vie par elle-même*, § 54

³ Glotin E., "Réparation", *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, col. 374.

⁴ Saint Margaret Mary, *Sa vie par elle-même*, § 92

⁵ This term appeared in the fifteenth century, first in law, then in spirituality. Cf. Glotin E., "Réparation", *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, col. 370.

⁶ Cf. Hartman P., *Le sens plénier de la réparation du péché*, Louvain, 1955, p. 20.

The demand for reparation is central to Paray-le-Monial. It is impossible to ignore it without depriving the 'message' of one of its essential parts. So it's up to the shrine to rediscover the ways of accessing this request of Christ and to give it a new relevance.

Moreover, the question of reparation is once again a sensitive issue in cultural and social spheres.⁷ This resurgence points to a strong anthropological need, to which Christ responded absolutely through his incarnation and his paschal mystery. Seventeen centuries later, at Paray-le-Monial, he would decisively highlight some particular aspects of salvation, relating to reparation.

It is important for us to be able to answer this question: are the events of Paray-le-Monial 350 years ago still relevant today, when the thirst for reparation seems to be reawakening?

Finally, we would like to place this question in the context of the Church's current and painful abuse crisis. The endemic and systemic spread of abuse cries out for reparation.⁸ We believe that the words of Jesus to Saint Margaret Mary, and their historical legacy, can shed valuable light.

The ultimate issue of our symposium will therefore be as follows: how can Jesus' request to *make reparation for the indignities done to his Heart, particularly by consecrated persons*, open the way for the necessary reparation due to the victims of abuse in the Church, particularly by consecrated persons?

From the outset, it is clear to us that offences against God are irreparable. Offences against victims of abuse cannot be repaired. Yet Christ asks for reparation. He himself, he alone, opens and offers a way of reparation.

So can we compare the "indignities" that Jesus describes as "ingratitude", "irreverence", "iniquity", "irreverence", "sacrilege", "coldness" and "contempt" with the crimes committed against victims of abuse? Can we move on from Jesus the victim to the victims themselves? How can we avoid an over-hasty spiritualisation that negates justice, and perhaps discover a form of reparation that takes up justice and also goes beyond it, responding to the deep thirst of the heart? How can we overcome the suspicion that reparation is a morbid perversion, and find in it the expression of

⁷ For example, M. de Kerangal's "Réparer les vivants" (2014) sold over 400,000 copies and was adapted for cinema; A. Garapon's "Peut-on réparer l'histoire?" (2008) sold 100,000 copies; 2018 Nobel Peace Prize winner D. Mukwebe's "Réparer les femmes" (2019); J. Herry's movie on restorative justice: "Je n'oublierai jamais vos visages" (2023).

⁸ In France, following the recent *Sauvé commission* on child abuse in the Church, the *Instance Nationale Indépendante de Reconnaissance et de Réparation* was set up (emphasis added).

greater freedom? Does it make any sense to talk about love, reparation and reparation?

How can reparation of love be achieved where human dignity has been so violently trampled underfoot, so far removed from what love can be? Can spiritual reparation put a name to the unspeakable? Does listening to victims offer a new ear for Christ's complaint? How does listening to victims reform the Church?

The first part of our colloquium will attempt to define reparation on the basis of what Saint Marguerite-Marie said about it and what she experienced throughout her life; also on the basis of the Johannine roots of the events at Paray-le-Monial, the context in which they took place, and their continuity in the history of the Church.

The second moment will be theological, in order to situate the need for reparation in the work of Christ. Christ assumed this need by bringing about Redemption. He did everything for humanity's salvation, but he did not want to save Man without himself, opening up a place in the inclusive act that he made, for humanity, called to take part - through him, with him and in him - in the act of Salvation.

Moreover, this need is expressed in many ways in human behaviour, revealing deep anthropological springs that stem from the thirst for justice, but also seem to go beyond it, touching the deepest part of the dignity of the person and of the human community.

This will lead us to explore the fundamental attitudes of reparation - consolation, compassion and *redamatio* (returning love for love) - in order to gain a better understanding of how reparation does not simply aim to restore charity, but to deepen what charity is.

In the fourth section, we will look at one of the paradoxes of reparation: it is not possible to undo what has been done, yet it is possible to make reparation. The Body, which has been traumatised by the violence of some of its members - sometimes many of them - can repair itself, because what unites it is stronger than what tears it apart. In addition, examples will illustrate how brothers and sisters today are repairing, with their hearts and hands, the wounded Heart and Body of Jesus.

The last part of the symposium will consider together Christ and victims of abuse, the Church and these victims. Listening to Christ's demands helps us to better understand the extent of victims' need for reparation. But conversely, can we not better understand Christ's complaint by listening to these victims? It has to be said that listening to victims transforms the Church. For if the Church has the duty and the

means to care for its wounded members, welcoming their suffering also repairs the Church and makes her more herself.

We asked the speakers to participate, as far as possible, in the whole conference. Most of them have responded positively to this request. Through the round tables, which will be places for exchange between the speakers and with the audience, through the breaks and meals, in which the speakers will take part, through the times of common prayer, we have the ambition to form a "community of reflection", journeying together, to open up new paths together. We expect more from this conference than what we see or sense today. We have put a lot of work into organising it, and we now expect to reap more than we have sown, through what the Lord will give in addition.