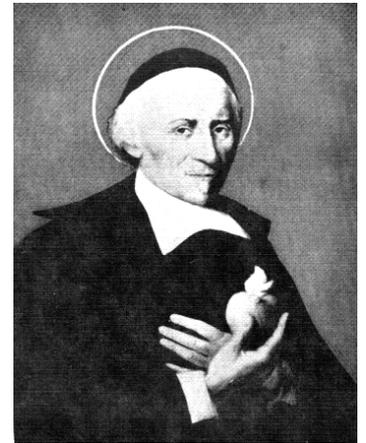


## Prayer of the Month • June 2015 • John Eudes

Oh, how good and delightful it is to dwell in the Heart of Jesus! Your heart, O good Jesus, is a precious treasure, a precious pearl which we have found by digging the field of your body. Who will cast aside this pearl? No, rather I will give all I have, I will exchange all my thoughts and desires and purchase it. I will cast all my care on the heart of the Lord Jesus and he will provide for me without fail. I will adore in this temple, this Holy of Holies, this Ark of the Testament, and I will praise the name of the Lord, saying with David, 'I have found my heart that I may pray to my God. And I have found the heart of my King, my Brother, my Friend, the benign Jesus, and why shall I not adore?' Assuredly I shall pray. For his heart is mine. I will say it boldly, for Christ is my head, is not what belongs to my head mine? Therefore as the eyes of my corporal head are truly my eyes, so is my spiritual heart my heart. Therefore, it is well with me: truly I have but one heart with Jesus and what wonder that there should be but one heart with the multitude of believers.

St John Eudes, 1601–80



The heart of Jesus is only an image, but a powerful one. There is a sense in this prayer, of identifying with this intimate, beating heart of Jesus. 'Heart' is a word still used today to convey the centre, the passion, the feeling emotion of a person. Here is a prayer of commitment and of identification – finding the precious pearl, adoring in the temple, the Holy of Holies. John Eudes was an originator of a devotion to the Sacred Heart, under the influence of St Francis de Sales. Eudes' prayers, written for the communities he served, made the devotion accessible to the whole church.

He was born on a farm in Normandy in 1601. He studied with the Jesuits, but in 1623 joined the Oratorians, being inspired in the spiritual life by Pierre de Bérulle and the mystic Charles de Condren. He thus became part of the French School of Spirituality, a strongly Christocentric movement, that also rediscovered the Holy Spirit. He was ordained in 1625, and immediately came down with an illness that confined him to bed for a year. During severe plagues in 1627 and 1631, he volunteered to care for the sick, and went about Normandy administering the sacraments and burying the dead. To avoid infecting his colleagues, he lived in a huge cask in the middle of a field during the plague. When he was 32 he became a parish missionary, and preached over 100 missions throughout northern France. He established the Congregation of Jesus and Mary (Eudists) for the education of priests and for parish missions. Eudes dedicated the seminary chapels of Caen and Coutances to the Sacred Heart. The feast of the Holy Heart of Mary was celebrated for the first time in 1648, and that of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in 1672. He died at Caen in 1680. He was canonized in 31 May 1925. His feast day is 19 August, the day of his death.

Colin Lunt