



# **The Source of Love and Mercy**

Thoughts of Servant of God Sister Ida

In presenting this booklet, we declare our sincere submission to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

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With joyful and grateful hearts  
we share with you the spiritual legacy of our  
beloved foundress,  
Servant of God Sister Ida Peterfy.

Countless persons who heard Sister Ida  
speak or encountered her in person,  
were inspired to live  
a life in union with Jesus.  
May this small collection, gathered from her  
written and spoken words, lead you to find  
the Source of Love and Mercy in  
the Heart of Jesus whom she loved so much.

Sisters of the  
Society Devoted to the Sacred Heart



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# God Loves Us Personally

Our Lord is always so involved in our lives. Whatever pertains to us is very interesting for Him. Nothing is too small, nothing is too big for His interest.



Rejoice in His presence amongst us: in His word, in the company of His beloved friends, and in the very depth of our being.



*Every single thing we have  
is given to us by His infinite Love.*



God makes contact with you, and in the process, you are somebody special, not because of you, but because He promised. He loves you personally and uniquely.

The love of our Lord is *it!* When you realize that He really loves you personally, then you cannot help but love Him back. Once you love Him back, it obviously leads to the Sacred Heart. Your life and His life are united, you are “hooked” into His Life, His Heart, His Love.



*We love because  
God placed His love in us.*



Let us ask our Lord with the words of Isaiah, “Come to me heedfully, in the tender compassion you have for me, O Lord. Be with me and help me.”

If we love someone and do not love those who belong to Him, then our love is very shallow.



It is very much according to our lifestyle that we are not just quietly acknowledging God's gifts but we are verbally acknowledging and sharing with gratitude God's goodness towards us and to our fellow men.



*God's love is not divided,  
you get it in  
an infinite manner,  
in an infinite amount.*

Jesus loves those who are His children – the needy, the broken-hearted, the poor. Think about it, who are those people? Those are our first concern.



God is interested in you in the manner He is, which is, He is absolutely interested in you, not just once in a while when He looks around and happens to see you, but you are always in His sight; you are always the object of His love, His infinite love.

# See with the Eyes of Faith

What do we value in people: what we see with our eyes or what is not visible except through the eyes of faith? If we are able to see each other with the eyes of faith, then we see that precious uniqueness and that God is present in each one of us.



*When we love,  
we truly want to see the good  
qualities of the one we love.  
And if we see it, we express it.*



We do so many things for others, can we do it for each other at home? See in each other that very precious person, the temple of the Holy Spirit.

We do not see God face-to-face, therefore, we do not love Him with an emotional love which comes through the impression of our senses. Your senses are not participating in that act of faith through which you see God. We love our Lord with a benevolent love – loving Him because we know how good He is in Himself, and this goodness is shared in a real manner with you, right now, and you do not have to wait until the end of your life.



*Those prayers and good works  
which you did for Our Lord  
increase in you those gifts which  
He has in store for you and which  
He is happy to give to you.*

*If we see each other with the eyes of faith, we understand the tremendous promise of Jesus – if anybody loves Him, He comes, and the Father comes, and the Holy Spirit comes, and they make their home in that person. That gives value to us and to everyone else.*



Ask for that faith, ask the Holy Spirit to live in you so that you could love Him with this highest love and so that you would be able to recognize His "relatives" and see His qualities in them. Then you will be able to love them and that love will not be an improper love, but you will love them "for God's sake" and with His own love.

This is the whole secret of life – if you love Our Lord, not just with an emotional love which comes and goes, but knowing who He is, you love Him with a love which is high above what we are able to produce; He produces it in us through faith.



*To be “solicitous for the things of the Lord” means to have an eagerness to please Him first, before, and above everything else; or, let us say, “In Him, with Him, and through Him.”*

# God Makes His Home in Us

Home is the place where you can speak up, you can talk and be listened to. If God makes His home in you, He is listening to you, answering you, you can talk to Him and He talks to you too.



*The day we understand and accept God's unbelievably great love for us, we are changed: then we will find Him everywhere – in our meetings, in our daily work, our studies, our prayer and in whatever we do.*



He is not somewhere far away; He is right here with us; He took His home in each one of our hearts; we are vitally connected to Him. This is so exciting!

Sometimes you might be wondering, “Why am I doing things? Am I selfish?” What are some sign-posts to look for which would help you to “see” your intentions?

*Our first aim is:*

*“Christ living in me.”*

*His eternal love and happiness,*

*His life in you, that is the “sign.”*

And this is our last end too – to be united in Christ in that eternal love.



Look at the tremendous love of Christ. He lives in your soul; the life you have is from Him; His tremendous love vivifies you! And day-by-day, through those ordinary events and occasions that come your way, you can increase your love or your love can diminish. How else can your love for Our Lord increase except by using all the means?

Nobody can wish, or desire, or want for you to do a certain thing for a certain reason. It is up to you. But you are not left alone; this is why Christ is so tremendously important in your life! In your every act, you can decide to do it for the best reason as Our Lord did.



*How much more personal can you be than to live in somebody's home? That God takes his home in you is a tremendous assurance of His love and His presence and His relationship to us and to everyone else who loves Him.*



God is 100% love! That is His life. This is what He is giving to us when we become His children. He strengthens us and He transforms us into the likeness of His Son; we become like Jesus.

# Trust in God's Love

*“Commit your way to the Lord,  
trust Him and He will help you.”  
(Ps 37:5) We can be very sure of it.  
We have to reassure ourselves again  
and again, but be quiet and wait;  
He sometimes does not act too fast.*



If you put your trust in God, if you really love Him, then whatever help you give, you give it to someone belonging to Him. Whatever you are planning to do, you are united to His infinite strength and you are doing it with Him, in Him, for Him. This is the basis of your unselfish, generous, good help towards others.

There is a very simple way to live without worry: don't leave God out. He is the greatest help I can ever think of in every plan I make. It doesn't have to be a big plan, it can be small plans. Nothing is too small for the ones you love.



We are fools if we plan without God. He seems to have a delightful way of upsetting things if we plan on things without taking Him into account.



*I can say that I love Jesus, but to say that He loves me? All my shortcomings come to mind, all the negative aspects. Take His word as truth and believe. Humbly take His word for it that He loves me with the greatest possible love.*

If we do our planning on our own, we get into circumstances which were not chosen by God and then we are surprised that He is not in it as a living factor, as a living partner.



*One thing I know is that  
God is good,  
and He is not less generous  
than we are.*



God is listening to you with full attention when you talk to Him, and He never refuses anything to you which is good. But His infinite goodness does not allow that He would give you something requested out of vanity. If God would descend to our pitiful level, He would not be who He is.

*All you have to do  
is trust Him.  
Give Him that benevolent love  
which really knows  
how good He is.*



It pleased the Heavenly Father to give Jesus to us as a “door,” as a “way.” It is awfully important for us to know where we are going and why. And it is important to know Who is our guide and model Whom we follow.

# Trust in God's Mercy

Zealous love is not counting difficulties. The difference between ordinary love and zealous love is that zealous love can overcome difficulties. We can have zealous love if we live in His presence and we trust Him completely.



*If we could only realize and emphasize in our whole life that, whatever we do, it is our Lord who is in front of us and who is the most important Person in our life.*

*Love covers a multitude of sins  
and gives an infinite number of  
chances to the other person  
to forgive and to be forgiven,  
70x7 – infinite according to  
Jesus' estimation.  
Love does such things.*



If we put God in the first place, even in the most practical businesses of our life, or the events of our life, what will happen? We will be peaceful, we will be all right. Yes, there is fallen human nature, the fallen human condition. But how much time can we prudently spend thinking about what can go wrong, or building up our life against difficulties? Do your part knowing that our Lord is going to do His part and the result will be just fine.

*He knows and understands  
and loves you because He knows  
there are tremendous  
possibilities in you!*



God does not handle everything equally; He does not give us an egg-like treatment, treating us all alike. He handles unequals unequally. That is God's justice.



Does God want us to be optimistic? If we really love, we are not ignorant or stupid about the existence of evil. We are not naïve to think that everything is just fine. We are optimistic, and we have maturity. This is the life of our Lord who kissed Judas in the garden and called him friend. He was optimistic and He wants us to be optimistic.

*God does not set limits  
to your perfection.  
He gives us chance after chance!*



It is important to know that God's justice is an intelligent thing and considers circumstances and motivations. God understands, He knows whether it was an act which was done according to your habitual faults – that you were too fast to say something unpleasant, or too slow to do something good. His justice is tremendously understanding.



*Our failures never change Him  
into failing us.*

He never says, “You didn’t do this for me, so I won’t do that for you. You didn’t become a better person, therefore, no more chances!” No! He judges us according to who we are – human beings, whose perfection grows.



*We trust in God’s redeeming mercy and His healing love; we trust that God is moved by need. When we acknowledge that we are not perfect, then He can come to our help.*

# Do not let Your Heart be Troubled

How important it is to plan with the good in view. Then you are not afraid. How many times do we need to lift ourselves up during the day? Maybe a hundred times, but it is worth it if we get into the habit of putting God first and planning with Him and in Him.



*Use your talents, plan, act,  
but don't worry.  
God will send help.*



It is important not to allow our likes and dislikes to rule our lives. When things come up, good or bad, think of who they come from, then your actions and the steps you take can be a way to show your love and care.

*When our Lord says: "Let not your heart be troubled," it is a command.*

*He acknowledges our freedom; we could let our hearts be troubled, but He encourages us, He says , "I am always with you, I will not leave you, whatever you ask, I will do."*

*So ask!*



From the lives of the Saints we can see that some people change overnight. Something happened in their lives and, all of a sudden, something became so important in their lives that they became much better persons. It does not mean that up to that point they were not good persons, but they became better.

If you ask God to make your love more divine, He is going to do it. If you ask Him to make your faith stronger, well, He is going to do it. If you ask Him to help you rely on His strength, He will do it. You are not just depending on your own muscles, you are relying on His infinite power. Then you are not scared of anything, not even of your own self or your own weaknesses.



*Ask our Lord very trustfully and earnestly, with all your heart, to give you the grace to recognize Him always and not to be disturbed or separated from Him by little things.*

We deal with obstacles as they come. If we concentrate on the obstacles, we are not going to do a blessed thing. The greatest marvel is the life of faith, hope and love in us, and that continuity of living it and going against everything that upsets that faith, hope and charity.



*Jesus is a terrific teacher.  
He keeps encouraging us  
not to be afraid  
to reach for more, for holiness,  
for strength, for divine life,  
to be like Jesus,  
to radiate holiness to the world.  
Don't be afraid;  
allow Him to help you.*

# Love One Another

According to St. Paul, the surest sign of the Holy Spirit dwelling in you is your love. Even if our conscience is troubled by temptations or failures, St. Paul says that our love for each other in Christ is a great sign that the Spirit of Jesus is with us.



Have daily reconciliation with everyone. That reconciliation goes on in our hearts. Kindness during hardships cannot come from any other source but from your own heart.



*Marvelous deeds do not  
make us holy, this way of living  
(in the spirit of Jesus)  
is marvelous and makes us holy.*

We need to review our life. It is so easy to put blame on others. We can make it a way of life, or I can stop and see myself, and put the blame where it belongs. I have to humbly admit that I am a sinner.



Reviewing our life helps us to accept responsibility for our sins. Then we can put up a good fight against the root of sin within us. This is also a sign that we live in the Spirit of Jesus.



*If you think of our Lord living amongst us, you can see His face in so many ways.*

*What we learn from Jesus  
is that the usual, the ordinary is  
what pleases God, if you do it  
with an un-ordinary love.*



We see the Eleven after the death of our Lord. Many of them had troubled consciences, temptations, and very obvious failures, but they kept together. Their love for each other showed the presence of the Spirit of Jesus among them.



If your love for God is real and true, your love for people will be real and true. It won't be based on someone being grateful or ungrateful, or someone asking or not asking you to help, or your doing good only to get good in return; you love them for His sake and because they belong to Him.

Think of love for God and love for others from this practical point of view: If you love someone, you love his relatives; not because the relatives are so great or wonderful or marvelous, but because of the tremendous love you have for Him. Somehow, you will be able to see the same good qualities in them as you see that the One you love possesses. The more real our love for God is and the more we love Him, the more we will be able to see good in people because they are His relatives.



*Our Lord could have done it all by Himself, but He loves us and He wants our cooperation to extend His kingdom to every heart. Ask for the strength and the courage to follow Him as His true disciple.*

*You are the means in the hands of  
Our Lord to spread the Good News  
of His salvation. Do all you can,  
collect all the treasures He gives you  
which “rust cannot ruin and thieves  
cannot steal.”*



This is the difference between serving a human master and serving a Divine Master: the human master will count the profits you make for him, and then you will get your share accordingly; Our Lord is counting the profits too, but He counts as profit the good will with which we performed our actions and the love we performed them with.

*Do ordinary things with a very  
“unordinary” extraordinary spirit.  
And do not stop at the means as  
though they would be the goal.  
Suffering is not a goal, it is just  
a means to love Our Lord more;  
success is not a goal, it is just a  
means to love Him more.*



This is what God wants from us – not great deeds but great love! For Him, it really does not matter what the material act is; He didn't get richer. He cares very much about the one thing only you can give to Him – your love! And you prove it by doing those things with more love.

# Freedom to Love like Jesus

We consciously want to be like Our Lord in doing the Father's will. The more we make conscious what our goal is, and what are the steps we are taking in our every-day life to reach our goal, the better-motivated and freer our actions become.



*Be just, as God is just,  
give everyone a "new day,"  
give everyone a new chance.*



If we follow Christ, we will be able, not to explain things away, but to *understand* those things in ourselves which help us to understand our actions and make them better.

When Jesus said, “Father, let your will be done,” it was a choice, a real choice. He freely consented to the Father’s will in everything He did. Being “like” Jesus is not an outward imitation of His acts. Actually this is the secret of our human life – *why* we do things.



*After realizing our oneness with  
Jesus in His personal love for us  
in the sacraments and prayer,  
we turn to His people.*



If we would not have Christ, it would be pretty hard for us to freely choose a life which is above our ordinary natural life which, at present, we cannot *see* face-to-face and which we cannot experience with our finite abilities.

We have freedom to follow our goal and go for the best, or freedom to settle for something much less and go after a human goal which will perish, which “moths will eat up” and it will come to an end.



When He meets you in heaven, His first question will not be "How much did you work?" The only thing He is interested in is "Do you love me?" And "Did you love people and all God's creatures for my sake as I told you to?"



Holiness does not mean *to be perfect*.  
Holiness means to be perfect  
*as God is perfect*. He is 100% love.  
If we love, we are *holy*. If we are a  
blessing for others, we are holy.

# Servant of God

## Sister Ida Peterfy, SDSH

1922-2000

Foundress, Society Devoted to the Sacred Heart

Sister Ida was born on October 7, 1922, of a Hungarian Catholic family in Košice, Czechoslovakia (*formerly Kassa, Hungary*). From her early youth, God prepared her to be a leader, to work for others, and inspired her to establish a new religious community. On October 7, 1940, her eighteenth birthday, Sister Ida pronounced her perpetual vows in Kassa, Hungary (now Košice, Slovakia). This marks the beginning of the Society Devoted to the Sacred Heart.

**God called Sister Ida** to bring forth a new community in times when the universal Church was attacked in her Chief Pastor and in her religious children. As the future of formal religious education became uncertain, the times called for religious who dedicated their lives to proclaim the Good News of Our Lord Jesus Christ in a new, appealing and

personal way. Sister Ida, with her earliest companions lived the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience in community life, without wearing a traditional religious garb, in order to be more approachable to those who were alienated from the Church by Nazism and Communism.

**With her ardent faith in God**, in cooperation with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Sister Ida developed an innovative catechetical method which initiated the community's religious education charism: *The Five Step Illustrated Method*. The small community was instrumental in religious education of children and youth as well as formation of catechists and distribution of catechetical material throughout Hungary amidst the dangers of religious persecution. Following the arrest of Cardinal Mindszenty, in 1949, Sister Ida and her companions were advised by Church leaders to leave the country, develop the community in the free world and some day return to Hungary.

**A new beginning** awaited Sister Ida and the Sisters when they arrived penniless in Toronto, Canada, in 1950. To obtain immigrant status, Sister Ida and her companions had to work as domestic servants for a year, earning room and board and \$40 a month. For two summers, working in tobacco harvests as unskilled laborers, they earned enough for a down-payment towards a small house and printing machines. Through their new St. Joseph's Press, they had a modest livelihood while they were learning English.

**In 1956, James Francis Cardinal McIntyre personally welcomed** the young community to Los Angeles and warmly supported them in their life and apostolate. When Sister Ida asked him about possibly adopting a more traditional veil and habit, Cardinal McIntyre assured her: "Don't change; the Church will need you as you are."

**The Cardinal's vision** was proven correct during the following decades; the Society

Devoted to the Sacred Heart has harmonized the best of religious life tradition with the renewal of Vatican II. In 1991, after a private Mass in his chapel during a private audience, Pope John Paul II, said to Sister Ida's community: "You are a blessing for the Pope. You are truly American and truly Catholic."

**The religious education charism** given by God to Sister Ida is treasured by her Sisters. The charism is well described in their newsletter, the "Joyful Apostolate" which Sister Ida began in the early 1950's. She expanded the Community's catechetical work to include a variety of Religious Education ministries from teaching children, youth and adults to directing parish religious education programs, sacramental programs, RCIA, catechist formation, indeed any place where the word and love of God need to be proclaimed.

**The Society was formally erected** as a Religious Institute of diocesan right in the

Archdiocese of Los Angeles in 1985, on the feast of the birth of St. John the Baptist. Today, Sacred Heart Sisters, from a variety of international backgrounds, joyfully serve the universal Church through their community apostolate of evangelization and catechesis in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, in the Dioceses of Orange and San Bernardino, and in the Archdiocese of Taipei where the community's catechetical apostolate is complemented with significant medical work. After the collapse of Communism, Sister Ida opened a mission in the Archdiocese of Budapest-Esztergom in Hungary where the Sisters conduct catechist formation and extend our catechetical works throughout Hungary and to neighboring countries.

**With wisdom, foresight and trust in God,** Sister Ida opened the Heart of Jesus Retreat Center, in Santa Ana, and Sacred Heart Retreat Camp, in Big Bear Lake, California. Both of these centers established unique locations for the Sisters' continuing work

and steadfast commitment to the spiritual enrichment of children, youth and adults, through Girls' Camps, Leadership Retreats for young adults, as well as sacramental retreats for children and teens. Children's Camps are also conducted by her Sisters in Taiwan and in Hungary. Seeing the spiritual quest of families, she developed a unique Family Retreat Camp program which is enjoyed annually by families in California and Hungary and periodically in other locations in the United States of America.

**The production of the "Sacred Heart Kids' Club"** video program followed from the request of parents, priests and educators who saw how effective Sister Ida's Five Step Illustrated Method was. With a team of her Sisters, Sister Ida produced 30 half-hour videos with teachers' guides, providing a unique religious education program for children. The program spread to six continents in English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean and Hungarian. When the new Catechism of the Catholic Church was

released in 1994, the Sacred Heart Kids' Club was immediately recognized as a dynamic catechetical tool in complete harmony with the four pillars of the Catholic Church: Creed, Sacraments, Commandments and Prayer.

**In response to the growing need for Catechist Formation**, Sister Ida created the "Be a Dynamic and Effective Religion Teacher" video course to bring her unique catechetical method, *The Five Step Illustrated Method*, to catechists and educators everywhere.

**With her undaunted receptivity to the Holy Spirit**, Sister Ida compelled her community to "move on into the future," as she said, with young leadership; and so in 1988, Sister Jane Stafford was elected as the first Superior General of American background. Sister Ida continued teaching the novices, giving spiritual retreats and monthly seminars to the Sisters, being actively involved in the community's

spiritual leadership and travelling as a religious education speaker nationally and internationally.

**Sister Ida passed on to eternal life** on February 8, 2000 in the Motherhouse of the Society Devoted to the Sacred Heart in Northridge, California, lovingly surrounded by her Sisters. Cardinal Roger Mahony was the main celebrant of the Mass of Resurrection; many bishops and priests concelebrated.

**The church was filled** with many friends, permanent deacons, religious and families who had been personally touched by Sister Ida's love and inspired by her life of dedication to Jesus Christ and service to the Church. The Cardinal noted that it was "a very unique moment for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, a very wonderful grace because it was the first time that we had a foundress of a Religious Community die in our midst."

**“The Joyful Apostolate must go on,”** said then Archbishop Justin Rigali, in his homily at the funeral. “Sister Ida, in her legacy of generous love still speaks to us.” This rite of Christian burial “...is a hymn of praise and thanksgiving for the love of God manifested in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and reflected in the gentle life and zealous devotion of our Sister Ida.”

**Paul VI Pontifical Catechetical Institute** in St. Louis, Missouri, welcomed the Sisters in 2002 to teach *The Five Step illustrated Method* to seminarians, religious, and lay catechists and conduct the community’s unique sacramental retreats for children and youth throughout the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

**The Pontifical appointment** of one of the Sacred Heart Sisters to the 15-member International Council for Catechetics (from 2002-2008) was a singular privilege, an opportunity to contribute their catechetical charism to religious education in the

universal Church in close collaboration with Vatican Congregations, in the heart of the Church.

**With her God-given talents,** Sister Ida's outstanding, global and lasting contributions in the field of religious education and in religious life are great treasures for generations to come. But what most touched those who spoke with her was the eloquent simplicity of her joyful spirituality that she often expressed in brief words:

*“God has a Heart for you!”*

# Prayer to Obtain a Special Favor

adapted from Sister Ida's favorite "Panic Prayer"

I love you, Lord, I praise you.  
Thank you, Lord, for all you have done for me.

Lord, I am totally helpless. Only you can help.  
I ask you to grant ... (mention intention).  
This is my burden. I give it to you.  
I know that you love ... (mention name).  
I know that you love me.

Please, come and enter this situation.  
Please, help as only you can help.  
I know that your Heart is moved by need.

Thank you, Lord.  
I trust and accept your Divine Will.  
I believe you have already given me what  
I am asking. I place all my trust in you.

I ask you to grant my request  
through the intercession of  
Servant of God Sister Ida. Amen.

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Please, send description of favors received  
through the intercession of Servant of God Sister Ida to:  
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Servant of God Sister Ida Peterfy, SDSH  
1922-2000

**In the Sacred Heart of Jesus Sister Ida found the Source of Love and Mercy. Experiencing the personal love of God transformed her life and inspired her to devote herself to making this 100% love known. Leading her Sisters by word and example, her life echoed her prayer:**  
*“Lord, I want to witness to Your love. I want You to be the center of our lives. Whatever happens, we will look at it through Your eyes, through Your Heart!”*

**During her lifetime, Sister Ida generously prayed for everyone who turned to her. Surely she continues to pray for us now that she has entered eternal life! These are her words, take them very personally:**

*“My prayers follow you, or rather,  
they reach the Heart of God  
before the day for you begins.”*

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