

# Conforming Our Hearts to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Into Your Hands | *Archbishop Robert G. Casey*

*You Gotta Have Heart* is a classic showtune from the 1955 musical *Damn Yankees*. Sung by a group of baseball players trying to keep their spirits up amidst a losing season, the lyrics reveal that only with each teammate giving his all will their hapless team find its way to victory. They sing out, “You gotta have heart... All you really need is heart... When the odds are sayin’ you’ll never win... That’s when the grin should start... You’ve gotta have hope.” The song reminds us of our own challenge as Church today to be united in efforts, one in heart and one in hope, one body and one spirit in Christ.

This year, as we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States of America’s Declaration of Independence, the bishops of this nation remind us that within America’s *independence* resides a continual and necessary *dependence* upon God and each other.

Our bishops recently made the most of this milestone in our history by consecrating this nation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a heart that strives to unite us with God and with one another.

At a time when so many people feel compelled to separate and divide, to build walls and ramparts, and to hold at arm’s length those deemed enemies and adversaries, our Church proclaims her Eucharistic identity. Consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we are a Church centered on communion, seeking to pattern our heart after the heart of our Savior.

The “Pledge of Allegiance” proudly proclaims us to be “one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.” That profound experience of unity can only be achieved with the help of a higher power—God, who challenges us to greater love and mercy. When we try to “go it alone” or

believe that we have the fullness of all wisdom and knowledge, God will, no doubt, shake us awake and remind us of our interdependence. The consecration of this nation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus can be for us the wake-up call we need.

The Sacred Heart burns with the passion of Christ's love and the fire of the Holy Spirit. How do we allow that divine love to burn in our hearts? Are we directed by the Holy Spirit—that God's will be done—or by our own wants and ambitions?

The Sacred Heart is crowned with thorns, reminding us of the wounds caused by our shared sinfulness. Can we allow Christ's divine mercy to bring about healing and reconciliation, that we might find our hearts encircled by love and not thorns?

The Sacred Heart is wounded and bleeding. Will we permit our stony hearts to be softened, that they may be pierced by the sharp and forceful call of Christ to allow God's grace and mercy to flow forth from our every word and action?

As our nation celebrates its 250th anniversary of independence, we've *gotta* have heart. Specifically, we need hearts modeled after the example of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In this "land of the free and home of the brave," may we boldly choose to love our neighbor and extend the Lord's mercy to all, so that with our hearts aflame we may truly live as one nation, under God.