



## Homily - Relics of St Margaret Mary Alocoque and Saint Claude de la Colombière, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2025

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**"I need nothing but God, and to lose myself in the heart of Jesus."**

Those are the last words that St Margaret Mary Alacoque spoke as she died at the young age of 43. "I need nothing but God, and to lose myself in the heart of Jesus."

These final words of Saint Margaret Mary are a powerful witness. And as we gather today in the presence of the relics of both Saint Margaret Mary and Saint Claude de la Colombière, we are reminded that these saints understood something fundamental about where to place their hearts—something that Jesus teaches us directly in today's Gospel.

"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Christ's words cut through the noise of our daily concerns and worldly anxieties. He doesn't condemn material things outright but rather warns us about the futility of making them our ultimate concern. Moths, rust, and thieves—these represent the inevitable decay and uncertainty that mark all earthly possessions. Yet how often do we find ourselves storing up exactly these kinds of treasures, accumulating not just material goods but also status, recognition, control, and security?



Chapel of St Claude de Colombiere, Paray le monial

Saint Margaret Mary discovered the alternative treasure that Jesus offers. In her mystical encounters with the Sacred Heart, she found something that no thief could steal, no moth could destroy — the infinite love of God made visible in the wounded heart of Christ. Her final words reveal the secret: she needed nothing but God because she had learned to lose herself in that heart of perfect love.

The world around us desperately needs what Saint Margaret Mary found. We live in times marked by division, where hearts have grown cold and eyes have grown dim. Jesus speaks of the eye as the lamp of the body—when our spiritual vision is clear, our whole being is filled with light. But when our inner sight is clouded by attachment to passing things, darkness fills not just ourselves but spreads to those around us. The Sacred Heart offers us a different way of seeing. It is a heart of mercy that looks upon human weakness with compassion rather than condemnation. It is a heart of charity that gives without counting the cost. It is a heart of love that remains open even when pierced by betrayal and indifference. These are precisely the qualities our fractured world hungers for, though it may not always recognise its hunger.

When we fix our gaze on the Sacred Heart, our spiritual eye becomes sound. We begin to see others not as competitors for limited resources, but as beloved children of God. We start to recognise that true wealth lies not in what we can accumulate for ourselves, but in what we can pour out in service of others. The treasures of mercy, compassion, and love multiply when shared rather than diminish.

Saint Claude de la Colombière, whose relics also rest among us today, understood this truth as Margaret Mary's spiritual director. He helped her recognise that the visions she received were not private consolations but urgent messages for a world grown cold. In the Church in France in her day there was a tendency towards rigorism and fear of God as a harsh judge. Jesus revealed himself to Margaret Mary as having a heart on fire with love and mercy. When she spoke of her experience, she was initially met with skepticism but Fr Claude de la Colombiere was sent to her convent as a confessor and he knew from the beginning that God was speaking through Sr Margaret Mary to the whole world. The devotion to the Sacred Heart that emerged from their collaboration was never meant to be merely personal piety—it was a call to transformation, both individual and social.

As we continue our novena, let us examine honestly where our own treasures lie. Are we storing up securities that moths can destroy and thieves can steal? Are our eyes clouded by attachment to things that ultimately cannot satisfy? Or are we learning, with Saint Margaret Mary, to need nothing but God and to lose ourselves in the heart of Jesus?

The world desperately needs hearts that radiate Christ's love—hearts that have been changed by prayer into instruments of His peace. Here in Northern Ireland, on our very streets and in our communities, we see how urgently this transformation is needed. Recent violence reminds us that hardened hearts breed division and fear. Only through the transformation that comes from authentic prayer can we cultivate the disposition of welcome and caring that our communities desperately need.

Our young people especially need our witness. They are watching to see if our faith makes any real difference, if our prayers actually change how we treat our neighbours —especially those who might seem different from us. They need to see hearts that have been softened by prayer, hearts that choose welcome over suspicion, understanding over judgment.

The Novena booklet contains artwork from some young people in our Catholic schools. It was a great joy to meet some of them last Monday — boys and girls from diverse backgrounds whose artwork speaks of hope and a sense of possibility for the future. Their creativity and openness remind us that transformation is not only possible but already beginning. They show us what communities can look like when hearts are shaped not by old wounds but by new hope.

The Sacred Heart calls us to a profound reordering of our priorities. It invites us to become people whose very presence brings light into darkened places — not because we are perfect, but because we have learned to let the love of Christ shine through our own wounded hearts. This is the treasure that lasts, the light that cannot be extinguished. When our hearts truly rest in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we become living witnesses to the truth that perfect love does indeed exist and that it has the power to transform not just individual lives, but entire communities and cultures.

We ask Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque and Saint Claude de la Colombière to intercede for us during these days of prayer, that we might learn to need nothing but God and to lose ourselves completely in the heart of Jesus, becoming instruments of His mercy, compassion, and love in our broken world.



Bishop Alan McGuckian presenting award to Aidan Graham,  
St Joseph's College Belfast