

Life at the Sacred Heart (1985)

You are a student of the Sacred Heart. Some of you are here for the first time; some have been here for many years. The duration does not matter. What is important is that you are a “child of the Sacred Heart,” and will always thus be known by God.

This name reminds you that you are a part of a Network of schools in the United States, and are bound to the Sacred Heart students on all continents. Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat, Foundress of the Society of the Sacred Heart, once said, “for the sake of one child, I would have founded the Society.” In a true sense, you are that one.

Coming to a Sacred Heart school, you have entered into a family and have come home. Jesus often used the image of home. “Make your home in me,” he told his followers, “As I make mine in you.” By coming to a school of the Sacred Heart, you have become a part of a family.

Accept with gratitude all those in your school community. From them and with them, you can learn what love is. Through giving and receiving you will foster the caring atmosphere that permeates your Sacred Heart home. Be grateful for all – the Head of School, the staff, your classmates, your teachers. Be thankful and show your gratitude by being attentive to all with whom you share life daily. Let God speak to you in people and in events.

Faith in God is the foundation of your education. In faith you will recognize God in your life – your joys, your sorrows, your struggles, your decisions and your choices. With faith you will be convinced that the meaning of your life and of our world is most fully given in the person of Jesus. Through faith you will communicate hope and confidence, for you know that nothing can separate you from God’s love.

There are special days at the Sacred Heart on which you will celebrate the mystery of God’s goodness. Eucharistic liturgies commemorate the great love of our God who became a human being and loved among us. The symbol of this love which is openness, invitation and unlimited space for others is the Heart of Christ. Several days in the school year are marked by commemorations of persons special in Sacred Heart history.

The Feast of Saint Madeleine Sophie is cause for you to remember and to rejoice in her vision, the heritage that is yours today; an education that is strong in its studies, serious in its principles and rich in the spirit of life and of love.

The Feast of Saint Philippine Duchesne celebrates the courage of this pioneer missionary who first brought the Sacred Heart schools to North America.

The Feast of Mater Admirabilis commemorates the place that Mary has in your life.

Prayer will be essential to your life. You will come to know God through scripture, through worship, in your classes, in your service to others.

You will discover ways to pray through a variety of prayer experiences. You will learn to listen to the Word of God spoken in your life and through the ideals of your education, and thus be led to “walk humbly with your God.” Centered in God, your response will be to act in justice and love.

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Genuine love always takes the form of service. In a world plagued by injustice, torn by violence and fear, you must stand by the most wounded and needy. At a school of the Sacred Heart, you will learn to take little steps and big steps in order to set God's kingdom right.

Social justice issues are studied at every level of your curriculum. Your studies will help you to attain knowledge about social and moral issues. But knowledge of injustice is not enough. You will be given opportunities to reach out directly to the needy – collecting food for the hungry, working with the elderly, tutoring the young, comforting the sick.

Sacred Heart education aspires to make you open-eyed, alert to the needs of others, generous and courageous in service. "If anyone asks you to walk a mile, walk two," Jesus told his disciples. This attitude of generosity is the end of your education.

The schools of the Sacred Heart emphasize studies which nurture the desire for truth. You will be challenged by the intellectual dimension of your education. Great emphasis is placed upon your capability for critical thinking and reasoning. Recognizing the distinction between what you do and why you do it is an essential element in your education.

Your imagination and creativity will be stretched, because without these, you cannot become a well-informed, thinking, sensitive person. Your learning takes place not only in the classroom, but also in all your relationships and all your experiences.

You will have the opportunity to be a member of student government, join clubs of your interest and participate on athletic teams. These opportunities will be sources for you to discover and develop your own talents, to learn to share your gifts and thus build your school community.

Traditions such as Congé, goûter and Prize Day strengthen relationships which are marked by affection, warmth and joy.

Helped by adults and peers to be truthful and honest with yourself, you will grow in self-confidence by dealing realistically with your gifts and limitations. Not all are leaders. Not all are athletes. Not all are artists. Do not grieve what talents God did not give you, but recognize and rejoice in the worth of others.

Discover your particular gifts and develop your unique potential. If you are sensitive to people, care for them. If you are a scholar, share your love of learning. If you can create with your hands, give the world beauty. When you find humor and laughter in your life, give others your joy. "The gift you have received, give as a gift."

The intention of Sacred Heart education is to address the whole person. You come as you are and are cared for with great love. The hope is to implant you a sacred love for yourself, to challenge you to be more honest, to lead you along the road of integrity.

Through growth and self-discipline, you will learn how to accept the consequences of your choices and actions. At times you will have to refuse yourself what you like: at other times you will have to act independently of what others think or say of you: in all your actions become free to live face to face with yourself under the eyes of God.

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Life at the Sacred Heart is rooted in Christian love. The spirit is one of courage and generosity. The educational philosophy of Sacred Heart is rooted in the message of Jesus Christ and the vision of Saint Madeleine Sophie.

Your Sacred Heart education is a way of life which calls you to change and, like Jesus, grow in “wisdom, age and grace.” Wherever you go, whatever road you may travel, you will always find a home at the Sacred Heart. Your relationship will endure and transcend all confines of time and space because they are founded on faith, hope and love. As a “child of the Sacred Heart,” by living in the mystery of your name, you make known to others the love of God as shown forth in the heart of Christ.

“By the love you have for one another, everyone will know you are my disciples.”

An Afterword

There must have been a School Rule in the Society of the Sacred Heart from the beginning. At first the way of life was learned no doubt from oral tradition and the observation of role models. But, later, at least as early as 1833, a written School Rule promulgated in the Society at the same time as the Plan of Studies. In 1852, however, a new draft of the inspired prologue of the School Rule was printed, together with a new Plan of Studies. The English translation of the prologue, together with some of the more meaningful portions of the more practical part of the Rule, was read to the children by Reverend Mother at the beginning of each school year. This custom held from 1852 until about 1954 when Reverend Mother de Lescurie sponsored a revision more in tune with modern times, also more inspirational and less prescriptive. This was known, in the English version, as LIFE AT THE SACRED HEART and was largely her own work.

An attempt at updating this School Rule, known as LIFE AT THE SACRED HEART TODAY, was made in 1969 by a group of Religious of the Sacred Heart at the Rosary in New Orleans. The writing of this edition of 1985 is sponsored by the Network of Sacred Heart Schools in the United States and is the result of brainstorming of several Network educators over a period of years.

We are especially grateful to Jan Dunn, RSCJ for the writing and editing of this publication