"The heart is deceitful above all things" (Jeremiah 17:9). These biblical words, written thousands of years ago, resonate with prophetic urgency in our time. We live in an era where faith is often reduced to mere "feeling good," where orthodoxy is displaced by *orthopathy* (the worship of emotions), and where *misericorditis*—that false compassion that forgets truth and justice—masquerades as virtue.

Is it wrong to feel emotions before God? Of course not. But when faith is built on fleeting emotions rather than on the rock of doctrine and reason illuminated by grace, we become fragile Christians, vulnerable to crises, spiritual fads, and—most gravely—the deception of the world.

In this article, we will explore:

1. **The origins of emotional faith**: Where does this tendency come from?
2. **Emotion vs. Devotion**: What Tradition teaches us.
3. **"False Mercy"**: When mercy is divorced from truth.
4. **How to build a solid faith (beyond feelings)**.

I. The Origins of Emotional Faith: From Liberal Protestantism to "Light" Catholicism

The reduction of religion to sentimental experience is not new. It gained strength in the 18th century with **Protestant pietism**, which prioritized "religious feeling" over objective doctrine. Later, **19th-century Romanticism** exalted emotion as a path to knowledge, infiltrating even Catholic circles.

But the great leap came in the 20th century, when **humanistic psychology** (with its emphasis on emotional self-fulfillment) and **religious marketing** (which sells God as a "satisfying experience") colonized spirituality. Today, many homilies, songs, and even Catholic formation movements fall into this error: **God exists to make me happy, not I to serve Him**.

Historical example: St. Teresa of Avila, though she experienced ecstasies, warned: *"Do not focus on these delights, but on growing in virtue."* Emotion can be a *gift*, but never the *foundation*.

II. Emotion vs. Devotion: What Tradition Teaches

Emotions are not bad. Jesus wept (John 11:35), was indignant (Mark 3:5), and felt agony (Luke 22:44). But His life was not guided by them, but by the Father's will: *"Not my will, but Yours be done"* (Luke 22:42).

The danger lies in idolizing emotions:

- **Rollercoaster faith**: If you only pray when you "feel something," your spiritual life will be unstable.
- **Undiscerning visionaries**: Many follow "private revelations" simply because they are moved, even if they contradict the Magisterium.
- **Sentimental moralism**: "If it feels good, it must be right" (here enters *misericorditis*—forgiving *everything* without demanding conversion).

The saints understood this:

- **St. Thomas Aquinas** wrote thousands of pages of *rational* theology, though his faith culminated in ecstasy.
- **St. Ignatius of Loyola**, in his *Spiritual Exercises*, warns: *"Do not change decisions in times of desolation"* (don't shift course when emotions are absent).

III. "False Mercy": When Mercy Loses Its Essence

We now address a modern ailment: **false mercy**, which:

- **Absolves without repentance** (as if God did not say *"repent"*—Mark 1:15).
- **Denies sin** to "avoid hurting feelings."
- **Reduces the Gospel to a message of self-acceptance without conversion**.

This is not mercy; it is sentimentalism. True mercy, like that of the prodigal son, **demands acknowledgment of sin** ("Father, I have sinned"—Luke 15:21) and the **firmness of a father who does not negotiate his son's dignity** ("Bring the finest robe"—*but first, the son confessed his error*).

Modern example: Many priests, to avoid "offending," avoid speaking about hell, mortal sin,

or chastity. The result? **Parishioners who mistake God's kindness for permissiveness**.

IV. How to Build a Solid Faith (Beyond Feelings)

1. **Catechism Over Gut Feelings**: Faith comes by *hearing* (Romans 10:17), not by chills. Study doctrine.
2. **Faithful Prayer, Not Just When 'You Feel Like It'**: *"Pray without ceasing"* (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Prayer is an act of will.
3. **Sacrifice and the Cross**: Faith grows in the silence of Gethsemane, not just in the joy of Tabor.
4. **Discernment with the Saints**: If a "spiritual emotion" leads you away from Mass, Confession, or Catholic morality, *it is not from God*.

Conclusion: A Love That Transcends Feelings

On this **Friday of Sorrows**, we recall the Virgin Mary, who *"kept all these things in her heart"* (Luke 2:51). Hers was not a faith of explosive emotions, but of *fidelity in sorrow*.

Your faith should be like marital love: there are days of ecstasy and days of pure will. What matters is **loving God when we feel and when we don't**. This is how we avoid falling prey to *misericorditis* and a "light" religion.

"Let us not love in word, but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). Emotionalism fades. Faith that acts endures.

What about you? Do you build your faith on rock or on the shifting sand of feelings?