

Homily 27th Ordinary Time 2021

At Holy Redeemer a Bible Study Group has been running for the last 7 years. There are about 20 members and the meetings have an average of about 10 people each week. Last Friday's session threw up some interesting ideas on Love in Holy Scripture, in poetry and in pop culture, David Read shared the idea of Salvation History being the 'greatest love story ever.' and went on to unpack some very engaging passages of God's passionate love for his people. He then quoted Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem, 'How Have I Loved Thee?' which encapsulates all that is good in human love and could indeed be used to communicate albeit imperfectly God's love for us.

In today's First Reading God's love gushes over into creation and the divinity can't help but share the love between Father, Son (The Word) and Holy Spirit with His creatures. Having made Adam from the soil He states: 'It is not good (remember God had seen in Creation, up till this point, that it was "good") that man should be alone, let US give him a helper made in our own image and likeness.' and so God took a rib from Adam and made Eve 'that they become one flesh'. The union therefore between man and woman by its very nature was called to reflect God's love in The Trinity a love which was faithful, a love which was everlasting and a love which was constant.

That love between Father, Son and Holy Spirit was also reflected in the Covenant relationship between the divinity and The Chosen People. Throughout the Old Testament God took the initiative in this, the greatest love story ever told. God remained faithful no matter the wayward actions of Israel, their idolatry and infidelity. 'I will be your God and you will be my people'. God's love was everlasting, constant and His promises were kept no matter the indiscretions of The Chosen People and their leaders.

God's final and perfect act of forgiveness was realised in the passion and death of Jesus. 'God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son to be crucified for our sins'. So whilst we were still sinners Jesus was condemned, scourged, crowned with thorns, made to carry a Cross, spat upon and ridiculed in the perfect act of God's love. In 1 Corinthians 13 St Paul explains how we should try and emulate God's love for us in simple attainable human terms:

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

In today's Gospel Jesus reminds us that marriage and married love is a sign in the world of God's love for His people-faithful, everlasting and constant. Of course, like The Chosen People and indeed The Apostles, for all married couples living up to God's love is challenging and we all fail in one way or another. However, the God given task bestowed on every bride and groom is an honour and a privilege. What a beautiful responsibility.

How Do I Love Thee? (Sonnet 43)

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of being and ideal grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for right.
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

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