

“The Love of God”

Last week we heard from the Gospel of John the account of Jesus keying in on two Sacraments of mercy. The Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Again, this week, we heard the account from the Gospel of Luke on the same Sacraments. Both Sacraments are about love of God.

Love is the ultimate sacrifice we can make. It means to empty ourselves of human desires and filling ourselves with heavenly desires. It is the love that Jesus has for us that led Him to willingly embrace the cross and to show us how to love others. His self-sacrifice, is a model for us on how we are to love God and one another. His love is a revelation of God’s self-offering by emptying Himself of His divinity out of His love for us.

When we reach deeper into our hearts to understand His willingness to accept both the suffering and the joy that comes with love, we get a glimpse of who Jesus Christ is and what God is like. What Jesus showed us on the cross is, that we should not be afraid to suffer for the love of God and the love of neighbor. If we are afraid, then we have lost confidence in the reward that has been promised to us. His promise tells us that after toil, comes rest, after death comes life.

Jesus tells us that when we love our enemies, we love perfectly. So our perfection lies in our love for our enemies. His action on the cross reminds us of this perfect love. Who would not be moved by His prayer on the cross **“Father forgive them for they know not what they do.”** Is warmth, love, gentleness, lacking in this prayer?

Stephen the first Martyr, exhibited Jesus’ perfect love, when he was being stoned to death. Instead of anger and using curses, he prayed the same prayer Jesus prayed for His enemies. This or similar prayer is what Jesus wants us to pray when we feel wronged by others. He tells us, if He was misunderstood, who are we to recoil and get angry when others misunderstand us?

We are told in our Gospel reading that after He had assured His disciples about His bodily resurrection, in His love, Jesus opened the minds of His apostles to let them see how Scripture foretold His suffering, death, and resurrection and that repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached in His name throughout the world.

What should be our response to God’s love? This is the task we heard St Peter carrying out in our first reading. We heard Peter eloquently put into words, to fellow Jews in Jerusalem about the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus, which opened the door for some of them to repent and be converted so their sins could be wiped away.

While Peter put the blame of the death of Christ on them on one hand, on the other hand, he told them that it was due to their ignorance that they committed the sin of crucifying the author of life, thereby opening the door for their conversion. As we know, God does not will the death of a sinner but rather that he be converted and live.

Our response to the call of repentance and conversion is given to us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation so we can develop a deeper and more meaningful relationship with God. That is when we do surrender to Christ and tell Him what He already knows about us.

Just as He asked Cain when he killed Abel and just as He asked David when he sinned, God wants us to vocalize our sins to Him in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He will then put His loving arms around us with the deepest love we could never imagine; and we will become an instrument of His love to others. Then we will be able to look into the faces of strangers we meet, friends and our family members and see God's compassion and love and tell them that despite our differences, we love them.

Love is not love unless it is totally free. God's love is totally free. So every day, we need to seek God's love and guidance in our lives. It is love, His love that changes us and transforms us, not guilt, or duress. As we are sinners, every day we need to seek God's wisdom and strength to overcome temptation and make the right decisions so we can daily recommit ourselves to God's love.

As we come to receive Him in the Eucharist, let us ask Jesus to help us be more receptive to His love in our lives.