

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Jer 1:4-5,17-19; Ps 71:1-6,15-17; 1 Cor 12:31-13:13; Lk 4:21-30

ST. PAUL'S ODE TO LOVE

Homily by Fr. Michael A. Van Sloun

Saturday, January 30, 2010, 5:00 p.m.

St. Paul was **not** one of the twelve **apostles**,
and as far as we know,
because of the way that he persecuted Christians,
he never heard Jesus speak nor was he ever one of his companions.

Yet our **second reading** today from St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians
does an excellent job **capturing Jesus' teachings on love** in the gospels.

St. Paul had a remarkable conversion experience **with Jesus** on the road to Damascus,
and later spent two very intensive weeks with St. Peter in Jerusalem
learning more **about** what **Jesus did** and **said**,
and from all this St. Paul was able to compose his famous *Ode to Love*,
based upon Jesus' teachings about love.

This reading is *the most popular scripture reading for weddings*,
and it provides very specific instructions on how a husband and wife can better love each other.

But this is **not just for married couples**.
These **principles of love apply to everyone**:
parents and children, brothers and sisters,
classmates, co-workers, teammates,
neighbors, friends, fellow parishioners,
even the priests in the rectory!

The **love of Jesus** is **patient** (1 Cor 13:4a).

There are many aspects to love,
but St. Paul placed **patience** at the **head of the list**.

This is a keen insight.

When we are "short" with each other, it is then that we do the most damage.

Impatience leads to nasty comments, road rage, and outbursts.

It is hard to be patient when we are
over-scheduled, over-busy,
over-tired, or over-hungry.

One of the greatest measures of love is to
take control of ourselves and **slow down**.

Jesus was **patient** with his **disciples** despite all their shortcomings.

God is **patient** with **us**.

We need to be **patient** with each other.

Patience is one of the greatest **measures of love**.

The **more patient** we are, the **more** we are **like God** (Gal 5:22; 1 Jn 4:8,16).

Paul continues, the **love of Jesus** is also **kind** (1 Cor 13:4a),
kind in word and kind in **deed**.

It is amazing how many people who claim to be good or religious or Christian are at the same time critical, temperamental, or self-centered.

Kind words are so important:

a greeting, a compliment, an encouragement,
a pleasantry, a joke.

The **silent treatment** is **horrible**,
contrary to everything that **Jesus** ever taught.

In fact, the **silent treatment** is an act of **emotional violence** against another.

It is a marvelous **act of love** to **break the ice**,
start a conversation,
and have **something nice to say**.

Kind deeds go hand-in-hand with kind words.

It is an act of kindness to

set aside being caught up with ourselves,
pay attention to the other person,
anticipate their needs or preferences or desires,
and do something thoughtful and considerate they would like.

Jesus was very **kind** to his disciples.

God is **kind** to all of us.

Kindness is one of the greatest ways to show love,
and Jesus said, “This is how all will know that you are my disciples,
if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35).

The **love of Jesus** is **not envious**, it is **not jealous** (1 Cor 13:4b).

Love rejoices in other peoples’ talents and abilities,
their accomplishments, and their material blessings.

This is very difficult in a competitive world in which we’re taught to be No. 1,
to get “one up” on other people.

Jesus was **never envious**.

He tried as hard as he could to **help** his disciples **be the best** that they could be,
to help them **achieve** their **full potentials**.

Husbands and wives who truly love each other don’t compete with each other;
they want the best for each other
and try to help each other reach their full potential.

Furthermore, **jealousy** is a great **affront against God**.

It says, “God, the talents and opportunities that you gave to that person
are better than the ones that you gave to me.”

Jealousy says that we are unhappy with what God has given us.

We are much better to count our own blessings,
appreciate what we have, and be glad for what others have.

Love is not rude (1 Cor 13:5a).
Love is polite, well-mannered, and courteous.

Love is not self-seeking (1 Cor 13:5a).
Self-seekers want privileges.

They want it their way all the time:
“my way or the highway.”

The love of Jesus is about service freely and cheerfully given (Jn 13:1-15),
about being generous without seeking repayment (Lk 14:12,14).

Love is not angry, not quick-tempered (1 Cor 13:5b).

It is very easy to get exasperated and fly off of the handle.

The person who is the **master** of their **temper** is the **master of themselves!**

It is a marvelous act of love to be cool, calm, and collected
when our circumstances can be so speedy, hectic, chaotic.

Jesus was incredibly **calm** with his disciples,
and ideally, we would be very calm with each other.

And we finish with: “**Love keeps no record of wrongs**” (1 Cor 13:5b).

Love doesn't keep a list of old hurts.

It's not like Santa Claus:

“I'm **making a list**, and checking it twice,”
or three times, or over and over again.

“**Grocery-listing**” keeping a list of old wrong and hurts,
from five years ago, last year, last month, and last week.

Keeping a **record of wrongs** keeps a relationship **stuck in pain**,
and **hurt** leads to anger,

and **anger**, left unchecked, festering, leads to rage,

and **rage**, unchecked, leads to violence:

verbal violence,

emotional violence,

physical violence.

One of the greatest acts of love a person can do is **let go of past hurts**,

to **quit rehashing old mistakes** over and over again,

to **let go** of the desire to **punish** and **get even**,

to **set aside resentment** - and **FORGIVE**.

Jesus did not keep a list on his disciples.

He could have.

His disciples did lots of stupid and terrible things.

But **Jesus** chose to let go of those hurts old hurts.

I have a **major request** for you:

if you are keeping a **record of wrongs**,

if you have a **grocery list**,

please, burn your list of old hurts!

Today, please, pledge to **begin anew**,
to love each other with all your hearts.
Why? You might ask.

Because **God is love** (1 Jn 4:8,16),
and **love is God's dream for us**.

Jesus said, "This is how all will know that you are my disciples,
if you have **love for one another**" (Jn 13:35).

"So faith, hope, and love remain, these three;
but the **greatest** of these is **love**" (1 Cor 13:13).