

# Quinquagesima

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[ 0 : 00 ] Today is the feast for Saint Valentine of Rome and the wider world of course knows this as Valentine's Day, although they know very little of anything about this great saint.

February the 14th is a day of world celebrated romance. It's a day to tell that boyfriend, girlfriend, or marital spouse how much they mean.

Flowers, candy, cards express our love and appreciation. Therefore the timing of our appointed epistle texts this morning could not be more relevant.

We heard from Saint Paul in what is often called the love chapter of the Bible here in 1 Corinthians chapter 13. Saint Paul says that even if we speak with great skill or with the tongues of angels, if we have not love, we are nothing but an off-putting noise or a clanging cymbal.

Even if we were to give all that we have to the poor, if we have not love, it means nothing. Saint Paul reiterates the three great virtues of faith, hope, and love and says that the greatest of these is love.

[ 1 : 32 ] So it begs the question, what is love? We hear this four-letter word used quite often.

We even read slogans that say love is love. What in the world does that mean? I'm afraid that many people today use words, they use language without any knowledge or care of the actual meaning. Love in our day.

I think Saint Paul gives us a true definition of love, which we read about and which we heard in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, verses 4 through 7.

Saint Paul writes, Love suffers long and is kind. Love does not envy. Love does not parade itself.

[ 2 : 54 ] It's not puffed up. It does not behave rudely. It does not seek its own. It does not provoke. Thinks no evil. Does not rejoice in iniquity.

That word iniquity means sin. But rejoices in the truth. Bears all things. Believes all things. Hopes all things. Endures all things.

Now, I want us to look just briefly at what love is and what it's not according to 1 Corinthians chapter 13.

We read that love suffers. Love suffers and is kind. In other words, love means going through the good and the bad times with another person.

In marriage, this means until death do us part. It means being kind rather than being mean or mean-spirited.

[ 3 : 57 ] Love does not envy, meaning that love is not jealous or harbor ill feelings towards another. Love is not prideful.

Whereas Saint Paul says, it does not parade itself. In other words, a person that loves is not always trying to be the center of attention.

Nor is it puffed up. Meaning love is not arrogant. It's not self-centered. Love is not rude. Love does not think of evil or to plot evil.

Love does not rejoice in sin, but rejoices in the truth, Saint Paul says. In other words, the truth might hurt.

It might sting. But we can't lie just to affirm people in falsehood. Friends, love is not simply getting along with others and telling them what they want to hear.

[ 5 : 03 ] That's not love. Love is truthful. Love is truthful. Love is truthful. Even when it hurts. Even when it stings. As a priest, if you ask me, what's the worst thing about your job?

I would say, well, I don't really like a lot of long meetings. But I don't know too many people that do. But I would say having to confront people who are living in open rebellion against God.

Whether that be in some adulterous affair or in a same-sex relationship. Because I can't lie about this.

Love is truthful. To say what people want to hear is the opposite of love. It's being deceptive. And it's to do that to be liked by others in order to keep the peace. Don't trust people.

[ 6 : 17 ] Especially clergy that do such things. Because they're liars. People-pleasing is nothing more than pride of the most perverse manner.

It wants to be liked. The person wants everybody to pat them on the back. And that's not love. As the Lord says in Isaiah chapter 5.

Woe, woe to those. Who call evil good and good evil. Affirming falsehood is not true love. Love does not rejoice in iniquity.

Which, again, literally means sin. But rejoices in the truth. Love bears all things. Believes all things. Now, this does not mean that we go around being gullible. Believing everything we hear. Bearing and believing pertains to that which is true.

[ 7 : 18 ] The truth. Love hopes and endures for the sake of the truth. For the sake of Christ. Who embodies and extends perfect love.

To each and every one of us. Because Jesus is the way. The truth. He is life. You see, love is not a mere feeling.

Love is not seeking our own good. Love is God. Because God is love. And this God has revealed himself.

By taking our flesh upon himself. And in return. He extends his immortality. His eternal life.

To us. And as we heard in the opening words of our gospel reading. From Luke chapter 18 this morning. Then Jesus took the twelve aside and said to them.

[ 8 : 20 ] Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem. And all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. For he will be delivered to the Gentiles.

He will be mocked. He will be insulted. He will be spit upon. And they will scourge him. And they will kill him. Love stands for truth.

Even if it costs. Our lives. But love has the last word. Because we go on to read.

And the third day. He will rise again. Friends, love is found in the cross. It's found in the resurrection of Jesus. Who took the death we deserve upon himself.

So that by his own shed blood. And through his sacrificial death. We receive his righteousness. His holiness. And our Lord conquered sin and death by rising from the grave.

[ 9 : 22 ] And he did so victorious over death and hell. So that all who believe. All who put their trust and their allegiance in him. All who receive him as Lord.

Receive his life. Sharing in his immortality. And we do that. So that now. We practice a life of love. Sacrificing ourselves. For the sake of others. That's love. We now share in that eternal and divine love.

Because of Christ. The Father. The Son. And the Holy Spirit. And St. Paul's admonition to love here in 1 Corinthians chapter 13.

Is nothing more than now surrendering our lives. Our wills to God. Obeying his word. By living a life of humility.

[ 10 : 25 ] And walking in the truth of our Savior. Jesus the Christ. I mentioned at the outset of the sermon. St. Valentine. This great saint from Rome.

Lived in the third century. And was a priest. Some sources even say he was a bishop. But we know most likely he was a priest. He was imprisoned for speaking the truth.

And preaching the truth. Calling people to find their true hope. And their true life in Jesus. And this faithful priest was loved by others.

Even in the prison. As he kept preaching and teaching. To other inmates. And to even soldiers. About the love of God found in Christ Jesus.

Valentine was even liked by the emperor of Rome. Claudius. Amazingly. But. Because he would not surrender his convictions.

[ 11 : 27 ] He would not be a people pleaser. Because he stood by the truth. And he did this because of his love for Christ. He was beaten to death.

And then he was beheaded. But before going to his death. He wrote a short note. A short letter to a young girl.

The daughter of one of the soldiers. Or one of the jailers. Who had come to faith. And this girl had been sick. She was dying. But through his relentless prayers.

The Lord. Actually healed this girl. And so before he was led to the execution chamber. He wrote this little girl.

Encouraging her to stay close. To Christ. Where true love. Where true love. Is ultimately found. And he signed it.

[ 12 : 30 ] Your Valentine. Beloved. Love is not some whim. Or self-serving agenda. It's an act of worship.

It's an act of the will. Whereby we sacrifice ourselves. Because of the indescribable. Sacrifice and love.

Of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus. Embodies. This highest virtue. That we call love.

Amen. In the name of the Father. And of the Son. And of the Holy Ghost. Amen.