

THE HOMILY FOR QUINQUAGESIMA

I Corinthians 13 - Love in Action!

May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of all our hearts, be now and always acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen

In the Gospel today, Jesus forewarns his disciples of his approaching suffering and death, but ‘...they understood none of these things...’ They were not yet able to comprehend that Jesus was showing Love in Action...telling them of the work of Salvation – your and my salvation.

They also failed to understand the importance of the incident with the blind man by the roadside....how dare he interrupt their important lives! They went as far as to rebuke him for crying out to Jesus for help.

What did Jesus do?

He showed Love in Action!

He stopped; he engaged the man; he recognised him and his need; he dealt with the problem lovingly! The result of Love? The man followed him glorifying God!

The whole of Jesus’ life is the story of Love in Action; the outworking of 1 Cor 13!

If you were to turn to Luke 7:47, you would find another incident where a woman came to Jesus while he was dining at Simon’s house, and cried so much that her tears washed the dust from his feet....everyone was scandalized. “Doesn’t he know what kind of woman this is?”, they asked.

What did Jesus do?

He showed Love in Action!

He stopped; he engaged the woman; he recognised her and her need for forgiveness. He didn’t disagree with Simon about the woman’s sin, but he pointed out something Simon didn’t know and didn’t do – “wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many are forgiven; for she loved much : but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.”

It is all about Love, or as the Book of Common Prayer says; “Charity”.

Without Love – we are nothing, simply nothing....

Last week, Fr Godfrey Mathibe spoke about modern churches peddling wealth and prosperity, plundering the poor and proclaiming spectacular spiritual gifts. Some of these churches are amazing – huge structures and signs and wonders – but the driver is wealth and the chase is for numbers Love is not to be found there, and often, heartache follows the hollow message they preach.

Ours has to be a church, my dear brothers and sisters, modelled closely on the life of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, where the driving motivation is Love, and the logical outcome can be seen in loving Service. Love of God our Father, deep Love and Devotion to our Saviour Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Ghost, and a service of our neighbour driven by this Love we have experienced from God’s hand and that we wish to share.

The first Apostles can be forgiven for “understanding none of these things” as it was a new Gospel they were hearing, but we, who have the experience of centuries of Christian life, have no such excuse....we understand, therefore we must love, and that is our mark of discipleship.

We have, over the past while, during Covid-19, often used the Kyrie Eleison as a prayer model “Lord, have mercy”, and it is a good prayer, encompassing all the pains and sufferings of the present time. But there has to be another prayer that grows alongside the Kyrie Eleison, for once we realize the full extent of God’s great Love for us, as St Paul writes in Ephesians chapter 3.¹ “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in **love**,¹⁸ May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;¹⁹ And **to know the love of Christ**, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”,

then our prayer ceases to be one of supplication, or asking for mercy....and it becomes a prayer and a song of thanksgiving for the Divine Love we have been shown in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Just as the woman washing Jesus' feet, or like the blind man calling out to Jesus, we are to "love much" because we have been forgiven much...we have become recipients of God's unmerited grace and favour. We are mightily blessed!

So, once again, what kind of a church do we wish to be? What should be the qualities that church shows to the world as evidence of our Christian authenticity? The answer is simple. It is LOVE. We are to be a church where the worship is humble and adoring...filled with love of our Saviour. We are also to be a church where generosity flows out to the needy, and not into any of our pockets, and where respect of the individual and understanding of his/her need for forgiveness is to be found. We are to be a church of Love in Action...Love going up as adoration...Love going out as Charity.

Yes, we are called to love much, for we have been forgiven much....all thanks be to God for His great Love and Mercy shown to us.

+ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

TODAY IS VALENTINE'S DAY!!!



Who was St Valentine?

Saint Valentine (Italian: *San Valentino*, Latin: *Valentinus*) known as Saint Valentine of Rome was a widely recognized 3rd-century Roman saint, commemorated in Christianity on February 14th. From the High Middle Ages his Saints' Day has been associated with a tradition of courtly love. He is also a patron saint of epilepsy.



St Valentinus


Saint Valentine was a clergyman – either a Priest or a Bishop – in the Roman Empire who ministered to persecuted Christians. He was martyred and his body buried at a Christian cemetery on the Via Flaminia close to the Ponte Milvio to the north of Rome, on February 14, which has been observed as the Feast of Saint Valentine (Saint Valentine's Day) since 496 AD.

The liturgical colour for St Valentine is Red, symbolizing the blood of the martyrs. This has been carried into modern secular celebrations. Tertullian, who died in 225AD had this famous saying about our early Christian martyrs, killed for their love of Jesus:

Seed of the Church...

"The Blood of the Martyrs is the

St Valentine was martyred (beheaded) on the Roman feast of *Lupercalia*, a day on which the Roman people traditionally exchanged notes of love or affection. If you combine this day, and the colour (Red) of the Christian martyr Valentinus, you can see the origins of our current St Valentine's Day practices.



“The blood of
the martyrs
is the seed
of the Church”
-Tertullian

That is the true meaning of St Valentine's Day for Christians. A devoted Christian has died so that the message of the Gospel might go forth in power. We thank God for his courageous and selfless witness. St Valentinus has shown us Love in Action!