

## Homily – 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021

### Theme: 'Love'

You might be tempted to ask what does a Catholic Priest know about Love?

Well, that is 'love' in its most explicit sense of falling in love, or consensual love; conjugal love in the parameters of a marriage bond of love; but we know that love is manifest in many ways.

Jesus has no inhibitions to talking and teaching about love, because God is love. To have faith in Christ Jesus is to open up to the whole beautiful kaleidoscope of love symphony. I don't know if you ever saw that film, 'Love Story'? such a powerful expression of the love bond continuing beyond physical death. This is also expressed so beautifully in John's gospel, when Mary Magdalene gazes with loving relief on the resurrected Jesus, her natural reaction is to run forward and to embrace him, to cling to him, to want even to kiss him. Jesus, in his universal unselfish love, says to Mary Magdalene, 'Do not cling to me' but rather go and tell others; I am ascending to my God, who is your God'.

This statement is the key to the unselfish love of Jesus, that he seeks to impart onto the world. As he says too in John 14/15, "its easy to love those who love you, "but instead I command you to love your enemies, do good to those who hate you". This is the radical side to loving that many of us are too afraid or too hurt or angry to consider.

Jesus, by a real conversion to Him in Wisdom and action is inviting us to see love in a 'God Centred' light, whether that's sensual love, platonic love, agape love, Communion love, filial love, whether it's loving our sister/brother, or our neighbour, or the wildlife that surrounds us.... The message of Christ is that the most powerful way to disarm hatred and evil in the world is by love.

The important point we must recognise is that the love of God always comes first before the love of neighbour. – If we start first with love of neighbour, we will achieve nothing, because each understands love in his/her own way, while not interiorising the love of Jesus. – Its Jesus that gives uniquely the ability to love unselfishly. Thus, we become friends of Christ by our unselfish love.

It's interesting isn't it that when true Christian people try to share that unselfish love of Jesus, that they come up against resistance and persecution in the world. Think of Archbishop Romero, shot for loving the poor, or St Martin

de Porres ridiculed for his compassion to the outcasts of Peru, or the recent stabbing of an M.P making himself available for his needy constituents.

In a sense you know you are living the commandment of Divine Love when you do experience hatred and resistance. The culture of evil would prefer to see humanity divided and unloving towards one another.

Consistent with that contrast, Christian love is an exercise in awareness, - awareness of the other, i.e., beggar crippled in pain on the street, the cry of the broken hearted, the silent sufferer, the one child in a moment of danger – the invisible beings.

Those without the Christ like love, are no longer aware of anyone but themselves, locked in an ego centric, self-centred, greed that takes no account of the collateral damage on others of getting what we want, at whatever the cost; even the destruction of the world.

Its that love of God that gives us revelation in our prayer lives of who needs our help most who's love I cannot take for granted, telling Joseph to take Mary home as his wife and Padre Pio to build a hospital for the poor and St Paul to change for the better – to be a Christian,

God Bless you all in your loving,

Fr Jeremy C Bath