

Homily: 31st Sunday: Cycle B: 2021: Dt 6:2-6; Ps 18; Heb 7: 23-28; Mk 12:28-34

“What is True Love?”

This is the ultimate question of our life as a human being. **We are called to love and to be loved; that is the human vocation in God, but what does that mean?** That is what I want to explore in this homily. We are called to have a deep interior life of love with the Indwelling Trinity; from the moment of our Baptism, we are invited by God to “be holy as He is holy.” How we go about this will determine our eternal destiny! We need to remind ourselves of this on a frequent basis, so we stay on track spiritually.

1. In the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* or *The Church in the Modern World* (24) it states beautifully **the nature of man’s vocation is to love**, “*the Lord Jesus, when praying to the Father ‘that they be one...even as we are one’ (Jn 17:21-220, has opened up new horizons closed to human reason by implying that there is a certain parallel between the union existing among the divine persons and the union of the sons and daughters of God in truth and love. It follows, then, that if man is the only creature on earth that God has wanted for its own sake, man can fully discover his true self only in a sincere giving of himself.*” The implication from this (see St. John Paul II *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* (Daughters of St. Paul Press, 2006)) is the two fundamental principles of Christian love. **First** God wills human beings for their own sake, for their own good. Persons thus can never ever be used as mere means to some other end. They must be valued in themselves and NEVER treated as objects. This is what Pope St. John Paul called the “**personalistic norm**” (see *Love and Responsibility* (Ignatius press) pp. 40-44). This obviously is the foundation for all Christian sexual ethics. **Second**, human beings can only find themselves in a sincere gift of self. This is the basis for all the Church’s reflection on the meaning of divine and human love on a philosophical, theological, and practical level.
2. **The saints are our models on how to love God and neighbor in a proper way:** the way that is full of generosity and sincere gift of self. The Christian way of love is not the philosophy of love which says: what’s in it for me, which is our

fallen human understanding of love, but rather it is: what can I give to help the other and enter into the self-gift of the Triune Persons: the Trinity. As Jesus says in Lk 17:33, “*Whoever tries to preserve his life will lose it; whoever loses it will keep it.*” **This is the paradox of Christian love: to give is to receive.** Is our life of love rooted in that reality, on a human level: be it our marriage, our friendships, and our general relations with our neighbors, co-workers and classmates? What about on the divine level? Do we practice our Catholic faith - living out the teachings of our Church whether convenient or inconvenient, coming to Mass and to the Sacrament of Confession on a frequent basis, and most of all spending time daily cultivating a deeper union with the Indwelling Trinity in prayer, out of a sense of love for God; or are we simply fulfilling our “obligation” by coming to Mass and going to the Sacrament of Confession maybe once a year, and maybe rushing through a few prayers each day in a legalistic and external way. Which is pleasing to God? Mere external observance, trying to appear to others like a “good Catholic” - (remember if one has to say one is a good Catholic then usually one is not because if you are really good you don’t have to convince other people) - or rather really living the Faith with integrity not out a sense of legalistic Pharisaical obligation but growing more and more in true love by doing all things in life in relation to our Catholic Faith because we want to love like our self giving Lord and participate in the depths of our hearts and souls in His very Triune Love, by being ever more closely united with the Indwelling Trinity by grace in our souls? The solution to all human difficulties and problems on whatever level is a deeper union with the indwelling Trinity (see Fr. Thomas Dubay, *Deep Prayer, Deep Conversion* (Ignatius Press, 2005)).

3. **The saints were people like you and me who decided at some point in their lives to put God first and then everything else fell into place.** Over time the Holy Spirit was able to transform them more and more into the image of Jesus who is the one who leads us into union with the Father. Thus they entered more and more into the most exciting reality of the universe - which is to be drawn into the very life- giving eternal love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the depths

of their mind, heart, soul and strength in this life which led to a great love for neighbor, seeing in all of them the image of God whose children we all are, which then carries over into eternity. As someone once said, *the life of Heaven, Hell or Purgatory begins now.* **At the end of our lives we will be judged on the degree of our love as St. Paul says. If our love is perfected** by generously embracing the Indwelling Trinity and allowing our Divine Guests to transform us from within and purge away all sinfulness and selfishness, especially through a deep life of prayer and uniting the trials and tribulations of life with Jesus, **when we die we will be invited by God to go straight to Heaven**, for we will be a saint who is a person who loves the way God loves: *generously, selflessly and in truth, following all the teaching of Jesus and the Catholic Church, but acknowledging only with God's grace in humility of heart.* **If our love is somewhat generous**, but still filled with some selfish clings and not detached from even venial sin, **when we die we will have to be purged of these in Purgatory.** This is why we pray for all the people who have died and offer Masses for them which is the most perfect prayer, out of a sense of charity and concern for them in case they need to be purified of their sins. If they are already in Heaven God will use those prayers and Masses to help someone else, so it is a no lose situation. **Finally if we love selfishly** and don't put God and neighbor first but violate our duties in love toward them in a serious way **and die unrepentant, we will stay in the state of selfishness, turned in ourselves for all eternity, in the eternal isolation: Hell.** (See Fr. Gabriel Amorth *An Exorcist Tells His Story* for more information on this) of the dreadful and scary place called Hell. **As we will live, so shall we die.** Now is the time to learn to love as God loves, and it is there for us all to receive - if only we are willing to trust and allow God to transform us. He is gentle and kind, but also longs to cast the fire of His love on earth (see Luke: 12:49). His is a purifying love. There is an intimate connection between truth and love. **Authentic love has to be based in reality, for it to be love as God lives it.** May we embrace God's saving Truth, made known to us in our Catholic Faith, in love, so that it may set us free (see John 8:31-32), and we may be drawn more deeply into the circle of the Blessed Trinity's love, now and for all eternity. God bless you.