

CALLED TO BE LOVERS
20th Sunday Ordinary Time Year C, 18th August 2019

GOD CALLS US TO BE LOVERS

Sometimes we give in to distractions.
Sometimes someone close to us tries to hinder or even prevent our closeness to God.
Sometimes we are tempted to evade the love of God.
Sometimes we are afraid to commit.
Yet God calls us to be lovers.

On Thursday, for the *Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary*,
we witnessed the love of children for God.
Beholding the Year Threes, Fours, Fives and Sixes in prayer at 9am Mass.
Beholding the Prep Year and Years One and Two later at 11am.

In the evening, we prayed in loving solidarity
for the peoples of the four states in southern India
that have suffered so much from monsoon rains, floods and mudslides.
And as a family, we continued in prayer for them at the Friday Evening Prayer Vigil.

And today, we welcome adults into Full Communion in the Catholic Church.
We celebrate joyfully with them.
We share together the love of God in our lives,
and we express our love for God.

GOSPEL OF LUKE 12: 49-53

Today's passage from Luke is a hard Gospel passage to take in.
It can be tempting to water it down, but it is meant to be challenging.
By the time that Luke's Gospel was written –
it was a time in which some families had one or more family members disowned,
or reported to the Roman authorities by a parent or child,
for being a disciple of Jesus.

Let us hear it together.

**'I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!
I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under
until it is completed!
Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth?
No, I tell you, but rather division!
From now on, five in one household will be divided,
three against two and two against three; they will be divided:
father against son and son against father,
mother against daughter and daughter against mother,
mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law
and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.'**

It is difficult, not just then, but in different ways today.
Jesus calls us to follow.

In different passages in the Gospels, we hear about love, joy, peace, hope, gentleness, commitment, sharing, almsgiving, urgency, carrying the cross, inclusive family, community. And in the passage above, we hear about the reality of those family relationships that divide some of us.

EXAMPLE OF MARRIAGE VOWS

When do we ever make such an overwhelming commitment of love?

Let us look at the marriage vows.

One option says:

*“I, ... take you. ..., to be my wife/husband.
I promise to be faithful to you,
in good times and in bad,
in sickness and in health,
to love you and to honour you
all the days of my life.”*

The vows do **not** say just in good times, or just when healthy. or only when comfortably financial.

The vows include the hard times, the struggles.

Including the bad times, the times of sickness, of challenges.

The vows are a commitment, founded on love, and on honouring your partner.

OUR COMMITMENT TO GOD

We name the commitment in Christian marriage, *a covenant of love*.

It is not just a social contract.

It is the covenant between both partners themselves, and between them and God.

So too when we respond to God. We commit to God.

We declare our love for God. We honour God.

Not just when times are good or comfortable.

So deep a love, that it is even stronger than love for a particular parent or sibling.

LOVING GOD WHEN SOMEONE TRIES TO BLOCK OUR LOVE FOR GOD

God's love is not exclusive. God loves us all.

We reflect that love,

loving God while loving our family. Being Inclusive.

We love God, even if a family member tries to prevent us from loving God.

We love God wholly, even if a family member tries to minimise our love for God.

We love God unconditionally, even if a family member tries

to put conditions on our love for God, or tells us not to believe in God.

Today's Gospel names these efforts
to prevent our love for God,
or to minimise our love,
or by putting conditions on our love of God.

Just as in a marriage relationship,
partners need to find time for each other,
so too in our relationship with God,
we need to find time for God.
God has time for us.

DISTRACTIONS TO LOVE

As God's love for us is inclusive and deep,
God commits to us. God is faithful to us.
God entered into a covenant of love with us.
But sometimes we are so distracted,
we find that we are preoccupied with something else,
that we fail to notice, feel and enjoy God's love.

CALLED TO BE LOVERS

We are called to be lovers.
Called to respond in love to God's love for us.
Called to be committed.
As lovers, we carry the cross in love.
As lovers, we work in love, for a more just and peaceful world.
As lovers, we pray in love, being honest with God about how we are going.

As lovers, aware of our love for God, we seek the truth in our world,
in our workplace, in our families.
As lovers, we experience the fire of God's love.
As lovers, we experience intimacy with God.

As lovers, let us pray.

Fr. Gerry

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/081819.cfm>]

