

HOMILY – STORY OF LOVE AND HEALING – 31 JANUARY 2016

Love Story: God's love for us is an unfolding love story. In the Old Testament, over the centuries, people come to know more about the richness of God's love for them. In the New Testament we hear this love DESCRIBED in words, ILLUSTRATED by images and symbols, and LIVED out through his birth, his ministry, his forming a community of believers, his suffering, his death on the cross, his resurrection and ascension. And God's love keeps INVITING us through the Holy Spirit to be LOVERS of GOD and NEIGHBOUR.

Pope Francis in his Lenten Message reflects on this love story, quoting from the Old Testament, and highlighting in the New Testament, that Jesus is the Bridegroom, loving us unconditionally.

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Dt 6:4-5).
As the Son of God, he is the Bridegroom who does everything to win over the love of his bride, to whom he is bound by an unconditional love which becomes visible in the eternal wedding feast.”

Jesus, the bride groom, loving us. We are lovable. Yes, we are lovable.

The 2nd Reading is from Saint Paul to the community in Corinth. He tells us what our attitudes, our values are, when we are in love. The difference love makes.

Patient, kind, always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, to endure;
never boastful, never conceited, never rude, never selfish, not taking offence, not resentful;
without love I am simply a gong booming or a cymbal clashing.
Love does not come to an end.

What about examples in the lives of particular people.

The 1st Reading is from the prophet Jeremiah.

Even though active love can be challenging, God is with us.

God says to Jeremiah “I am with you”.

God reminds Jeremiah “brace yourself for action”.

So loving involves action, being prepared to make a difference because we love and are loved.

Surely to love that deeply, needs courage.

Yes. God will lovingly inspire us to be courageous.

In this Sunday's GOSPEL (Luke 4/21-30) the LOVE of JESUS is COURAGEOUS.

Being so popular in his home town, why doesn't he revel in that popularity, take the compliments, and live a comfortable life?

Why not just be secure and safe?

Why not tell people what they want to hear?

Why not be selective in his hearing?

Or with a temptation that is faced by all preachers, why not be selective in his choice of Bible texts?

We have heard of atrocious deeds of sexual abuse and other abuses of power in churches, institutions, families and in relationships.

Instead of the Church modelling the love of Jesus for everyone, we have heard of many instances of criminal acts, betrayal of trust, and cover-ups for the sake of appearance.

The Gospel passage is about Jesus challenging all of us to be truthful, to speak up, even when it means we will be rejected by some or many.

Jesus calls us to be courageous in unconditional love.

Jesus speaks about being receptive to healing.

He preaches about Elijah being sent to a widow at Zarephath, a Sidonian town.

He preaches about the cure of the Syrian, Naaman.

Jesus deliberately challenges his hearers then and now to ponder God's love for the OUTSIDERS in the world.

In this Year of Mercy, we ask ourselves -

Where is calling us?

Who are the outsiders in our midst?

How do we live in solidarity with the poor and oppressed?

How, as community, do we support those who have been abused in the church?

How do we seek justice, make recompense, seek healing?

Knowing God's love is inclusive, how do we as a community become more inclusive?

As lovers, we know that we need God's healing within us.

On the first Tuesday of March, we will have the Sacrament of Anointing during 9am Mass.

We will seek healing in many ways – physical, emotional, spiritual.

Please let me know, or a Parish Council member, or the Parish Office staff know, if there is an additional time which would be suitable for our parish community.

We are called to love, to be part of the love story of God, to love courageously.

To make a difference, not on our own, but by being uplifted by God's love.

To speak up against injustice and complacency.

We will continue to explore this love during the 40 days of Lent, beginning on Ash Wednesday February 10th.

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – Homily – Story of Love and Healing – 31 January 2016]