

Trinity I (2 June 2024)

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”

+In the Name...

In anticipation of my high school class reunion this summer, we have been asked to answer a few questions. One was what we thought in high school our dream job would be, and if we are doing it, if we LOVE it as much as we thought we would. Some people are answering ahead of time. Naturally they love their jobs more than life itself. Another question is about the love of our lives: did we marry who we thought we might when we were in high school. Fewer have taken to the airwaves with that one.

“Love” has gotten a lot of attention in the last few years. It is all about love, or for certain, it is not about hate. If you were an alien arriving on earth from outer space, an observation of the U.S. media might lead you to believe that love did not exist on this

planet until it was legalized by the United State Supreme Court on the 26th of June 2015. If you are “unenlightened” enough to think it existed before that date, then surely love did not come into existence until the 1960s. If there is a date in human history when love entered the world, I would hazard to guess it was the 25th of December, about the Year of Our Lord number 1. Another possibility is that love came to be on the date of the Creation of Adam and Eve, but even that dating would seem to sell our God short. As Christians, we believe our God is not just immortal (that is, He will exist forever into the future), but that He is also eternal – He has existed forever into the past. If that is the case, then surely He has had the ability to love eternally, and did not “learn” to do so at some historical point along the way.

Sadly, in our contemporary American culture, “love” has become synonymous with allowing a person to do whatever he or she wants. If it is what the person wants, naturally it is the best possible option for that person, regardless of whether that

conclusion flies contrary to what experience, experts, friends, family, the Church, or presumably, God Himself, would have to say about the matter. It puts both God in a rather tight predicament, at best, and downright unfashionable or even, [gasp!], mean, at worst. (Is not being mean one of the worst sins imaginable in today's society?)

The logic is that because God/the Church/Christians do not endorse a person doing whatever that person wants, they are hate-filled and do not love. I submit to you that just the opposite is actually the case: if God did not love us so much, He would not care what we did with ourselves and with our lives. Think of earthly fathers: in our house, like many houses, there are rules about such things as eating healthy foods, brushing one's teeth, and going to bed at a reasonable hour. A father enforces rules about eating healthy foods not because he hates his children, but because he wants his children to have the necessary vitamins and minerals to grow up to be a physically normal adult. A father

enforces rules about brushing one's teeth not because he hates his children, but because he wants his children to have a mouth full of healthy teeth when he grows to adulthood. A father enforces rules about going to bed at a reasonable hour not because he hates his children, but because he wants them to stay healthy and have the mental capacity to succeed in school and at life in general. If a father did not care about the health and well-being of his children, he would allow them to do whatever they wanted. After all, that freedom would make them ***happy!*** Fortunately as we grow up and mature we learn that many, if not all, of those rules we thought were terribly unfair at first, begin to make sense to us, so much so that we often insist on the same rules with our own children!

We are at something of a disadvantage with the rules of God, in that we cannot possibly understand all His ways as long as we live here on this planet. I have no doubt that when we pass from our earthly life, we shall understand things that always mystified

and baffled us. Of course, at that point we will no longer care at the apparent unfairness of life on earth, but the information will be available to us.

St. John makes it clear to us that love comes from God, and as Christians we must not allow any amount of brow-beating from non-Christians to convince us that love is antithetical to the Judeo-Christian God. We are called to share our faith and work for a better world not because we want control over our fellow man or because we want others to share in our so-called misery of “thou shalt nots”, but because God calls us to love everyone. What greater act of love could a person perform for another than to share the love of Christ, thus helping to pave the way to heaven, eternal life with God?

The challenge for human fathers, and for all Christians, is to emulate the love of God. When St. John says that God is love, it is not love in some abstract way, but a God Who wants to have a living, personal relationship with each person whom He has

created. Love is the highest quality we can attribute to His being, and we can see it manifested in two different ways: the first is by God's gift of His only Son into the world to redeem it from sin and to give mankind eternal fellowship with Him, thus saving us from eternal damnation on the Day of Judgment. The second is in the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in our hearts, which works not only to perfect in us a love worthy to respond to His initial outreach, but also in a love showing to our fellowmen His relationship with us. Theologically, the Holy Ghost is the result of the love between God the Father and God the Son.

At the beginning of every Mass except the first Sunday of the month we hear the Summary of the Law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind... and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The love reflected back to us by our children, and by our neighbors, is the outward test by which we may know the reality and sincerity of

our inward love of Him Who is invisible, but whose nature and purpose were made known to us in His Son Jesus Christ.

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