

My Dear people of God,

It is amazing how time flies by so fast. It is already February!

Today we celebrate the fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time. The second reading as well as the gospel reading of this Sunday are a continuation from last Sunday. Given that last Sunday, I focused on the second reading, I will do the same in this one since it is a continuation. In fact, it began the Sunday before last (Second Sunday –Ordinary Time)

Two Weeks ago (Second Sunday of Ordinary Time), in the second reading, St Paul stated that there are different spiritual gifts bestowed upon individuals not for their personal benefit, but for the benefit of the community. Therefore from the perspective of the community, one gift was not better than another. Each individual has his or her own gift to contribute to the common good. Last Sunday, St Paul using the image of the body and its different parts focused on the importance of several/different functions within the community of faith for the common good.

In this Sunday's reading he dismissed them as empty if they do not come from a foundation of love. He says: "If I do ... without love, I am nothing". It is not that these gifts or functions are without value. Rather, he is making the point that their value is in love. This is consistent with the entire message of the gospel, the good news which can be summed up in one word- **LOVE: Love God and Love your neighbor**. The greatest Commandment is Love!

If love is so important and foundational, the obvious question one would then ask is: *What is Love?* It is to that question that St Paul provides an answer. In our second reading today therefore he gives us what is acknowledged to be one of the longest and finest definitions or descriptions of love. In fact, this is one of the best-known biblical passages. In our society today, love is a much used and abused word. What our culture and society calls love in its songs, films and daily language use is not love at all. In fact, it is the opposite of love.

St Paul was probably well aware of the mixed motives behind the 'good' that people do. He understood how people could make great sacrifices, yet those sacrifices are worthless because they are done from the motive of self-interest and not of love.

However, he still believed in the possibility of real love and he emphasized the primacy of love in the life of a Christian. What he proposes in his description or rather definition of love is clearly an ideal. An ideal is like a star. It is out there and it guides us. We strive after it and in our striving after it, we sometimes fail.

To be possessed with love, is to be filled with a power which will not be denied; a power that will and can do anything, brave anything, suffer anything and endure anything for the sake of who or what one loves. If a person truly loves, he or she possesses all other virtues as well. Faith, Hope and Love are the three great virtues. But the greatest of them is love. All things pass away, but the kind word and the kind deed never pass away.

I would like to conclude with one of my most favorite quotation on love and it comes from the famous Jesuit Superior Father Pedro Arrupe:

Nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in Love in a quite absolute, final way.

What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything.

It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning,

what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends,
what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart,
and what amazes you with joy and gratitude.

Fall in Love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.

Thanks and God bless,

Fr Simon Peter