

Homily

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time, February 3, 2019

The power of love.

A crazy little thing called love.

Endless love.

Each of these song titles make wonderful images of what love means to us.

Over half the song lyrics ever written are about love.

Who likes romantic comedies? I must admit, I like them. Romantic comedies are a wonderful diversion about relationships and love, and they are often funny, charming and even heartwarming.

The number of romantic comedies has doubled every decade since the 70's

Our culture is in love with love. And it's no wonder why.

Love is an important and necessary part of human existence. We are made for love. God created us out of His love for us. We are called to love God and each other.

Donna and I love each other more today than the day we married. It is because we know each other better, we have more shared experiences and we have grown to appreciate each other. Some say that she loves me more now because there is more of me to love, and that is a true statement.

But what does it mean to love? I don't think song lyrics or romantic comedies grasp what true love is.

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he encourages us to strive for the greatest spiritual gifts. But, as he says, "if I do not have love..." then everything else is nothing, just noise. All those wonderful spiritual gifts amount to zero. We have nothing; we gain nothing – without love.

Paul uses the word agape when describing this type of love, the highest form of love; the love between God and man. Love with no strings attached. The love that binds us to Him in our covenantal bond. The love we are called to share with each other.

Paul continues with a litany of descriptions of what love is and what love isn't. Let's take a look at these and see what we can learn.

Love is patient; this means being persistent and at the same time easy-going. It's a balance that requires sometimes waiting yet paying attention to act when needed. How often have I been guilty of losing my patience because I was thinking of my own interests? Patience is best practiced when thinking of the other person.

Love is kind; kindness is portrayed by compassion and tenderness. A kind person tends to help others and to do so with sympathy and consideration. No one can be loving and unkind at the same time.

Love is not jealous; jealousy is a feeling of envy of someone or their achievements; resentful, as if someone is better off to spite you; possessive, in a selfish way to demand attention. How often have I let jealousy take over my thoughts causing me to dwell on what I don't have instead of what I do have. It takes strength and courage to admire someone who has more or accomplished more, but it is the right thing to do and it promotes trust, understanding and joy.

Love is not pompous; some people believe they are better than others. Although God made us all the same, He gave us different gifts. No gifts are better than the others; just different. The same can be said of people; we are all good and can choose to use our gifts in various ways. None better or worse. Our real joy is savoring those differences and celebrating the excellent use of those gifts, whether in ourselves or in others. We are all one in the same Body, the Church, though we are different parts.

Love is not rude; we all have a choice – we can be rude, or we can be polite; we can be offensive, or we can be pleasant; we can be graceless, or we can be graceful. It is a choice and we are free to choose. We need to choose wisely.

Love does not brood over injury; we have all been hurt by others, by harsh words or actions. We can dwell on the pain we've experienced, which doesn't resolve anything; or we can forgive and forget. This doesn't mean justice should be ignored, but sometimes harsh words are just that, words. And just as I've experienced the pain of an injury, I know I've caused injury, and for those times, I am truly sorry. Two wrongs don't make a right just as injury against injury solves nothing.

Love never fails; in all things we endeavor, we include love. In whatever our sufferings and hardships, we include love. In all our successes and victories, we include love. Love never fails.

We don't have to remember all these descriptions of love; we just need to remember that God is love. And God embodies all these all the time. We only need to strive to love as God loves, to take a sincere look at ourselves, be honest with ourselves and make the effort to improve ourselves, even if that means making changes in what we say or do or how we say or do things. All the while knowing we will fall short. But that's okay, because God is patient and kind, infinitely so.

Paul's lesson for us is to begin with love. All we have and all we do begins with love. And in the end, through all of life's challenges, we will be able to see clearly, as God sees, not partially, but fully.

Our challenge is to start our day with love, bring love to all our activities, share love with all those we meet and at the end of the day, share our experiences with God who is love.