

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time: Let God's Love Be Love

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings to you with the words of the responsorial psalm, "forever I will sing the goodness of the Lord! (cf. Psalm 89).

Our parish patron saint, St. Theresa has her way of singing this goodness of the Lord. It is through her little ways of doing things with great love. Did you know that two days before she died she requested to be alone at night? Despite her request, the assigned sister, the infirmarian, used to rise several times during the night to check on her. On one occasion, she found St. Therese with hands clasped and eyes raised to Heaven. "But what are you doing?" she asked; "you should try to sleep." Therese replied, "I cannot, dear Sister, I suffer too much! then I pray..." She curiously inquired, "And what do you say to Jesus?" Therese responded, "I say nothing; I love Him!" On another occasion, one of the sisters was speaking to her about the happiness of Heaven. Therese interrupted, saying, "It is not that which attracts me..." "What is it then?" "Oh! It is LOVE! To love, to be loved, and to come back to earth to make LOVE loved" (cf. Story of a Soul, Chapter XII).

Today, our Lord Jesús speaks about this love, which is an essential condition of discipleship. He said, "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; whoever does not take up his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matt 10:37-39). These are such intense demands, isn't it? How can our Lord say such things?

We can say that Jesus wants his disciples to take part in his walk of love, not just talk about it. He does not ask us to love our family less, but he challenges us to cast our love wholeheartedly to God and choose him first. When we choose to love God first, we open up to his transforming grace — a love that heals and helps us to get rid of anything that is hurting our lives and others, letting God's love be love, for we can only love others, and even ourselves truly if we allow ourselves to be emptied of self-love and filled with God's love.

Here's another thing - the disciples of Jesus are not just those who dispense love but also receive love and hospitality. He said, "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me" (Matt. 10:40). The disciples must rely on the hospitality of others for daily necessities during their mission. Service rendered to them is service to Jesus himself. This implies to welcome the help of others. He who does not welcome the help from others does not know how to help others. In the same manner, a person who is incapable of receiving love is equally incapable of giving it. It is like a battery; if the battery cannot receive electricity, it will not be able to provide power. We see the practical example of this in our first reading, from 2 Kings. It tells us the story of a woman who showed love in action through her hospitality. She welcomed Elisha to dinner with her family and arranged a room for him to have a comfortable place to stay. Elisha returned her kindness by interceding with God to obtain the miracle of a baby after long years of infertility. We find in this story charity begets charity or love begets love.

It is the love of God freely received, and the love willingly shared that will help and enable us to grow in our Lord's invitation of love.

On the other hand, part of this love for Jesus is to take up one's cross and follow him. Of course, this is not easy. But Jesus is the reason that we carry our crosses. Our memory of his suffering on the cross with all its ugliness and cruelty that he willingly accepted, which has become a symbol of incredible hope and love, graces us with encouragement and comfort. There were a countless number of people who have been able to bear the crosses of their own lives with some sense of serenity because of their faith in Jesus, who went through the suffering and the death on the cross before them. In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul expressed this confidence that if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him (cf. Rom. 6:8). We don't carry our crosses alone. We take them up by walking close with Jesús, and never away from him, never to distance from

him, even an inch. We draw our strength and courage from his sacrifice, knowing that we are loved beyond measure. The grace of his sacrifice is present before us. We celebrate it. It is offered to us in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Our patron saint, St. Theresa of the Child Jesus, finds this strength and courage. She desires to continue learning this love of Jesus. In her diary, *Story of A Soul*, she wrote, "Love attracts love, mine rushes forth to you, it would fain fill up the abyss which attracts it, but alas! It is not even as one drop of dew lost in the Ocean. To love you as you love me, I must borrow your very love - then only, can I find rest" (Chapter XI).

Let us give life to our love for Jesus through imitating the little ways of St. Therese. Let this love be the melody in our living and dealings with one another.

In Christ,

Fr. Manny Hewe
Pastor, CCST