

## 30<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time “The Best Medicine for our Times”

Fr. Frank Schuster

I think I have had the opportunity to preach on this Gospel reading a thousand times, at weddings, baptisms, daily mass and Sunday Mass to name a few. There is nothing more basic about being a disciple of Jesus than: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." As you have heard me say before, the whole bible can be summarized thus: 1 John 4:16 says, "God is love." Genesis 1:26-27 states that we are made in the image and likeness of God, who is love. St. Paul therefore tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter 13 that without love we are nothing. Jesus teaches us this weekend that love is at the heart of what it means to be human and to be his disciple. And, I don't know about you, but I feel like this is a Gospel reading that the world could reflect on now more than ever. And, I only mention it, because it is something that I also have felt the need to reflect on more and more. I think we all do.

After all, is it just me or does it feel like there is not a lot of love in our world today? What is missing in the political campaigns in our country right now? Love. What is missing in the protests and in the counter-protests that go on in the streets? Love. What is missing right now, in my point of view, with regard to how we are all dealing with the pandemic? Clearly there is still a lot of fear. There is also still a lot of frustration. However, we cannot forget the need to love those around us, those who are in the “at risk” groups, especially those who have been basically landlocked at home for all these months. We also cannot forget to love those who feel marginalized in any way, those who have lost their jobs, those who have fallen sick, and perhaps those who are becoming more and more exhausted caring for the sick and have the winter to look forward to.

And sometimes the biggest deficit of love I am finding in the confessional can be in our own families. Everybody who is close to us in our families or workplace are trying to get through these times the best they can, just as we are. We all have good days and bad days. We all want people to cut us some slack when we are not at our best. Are we providing others the same courtesy? We all want to be loved. This is basic human need. Are we loving the people in our life the way we should right now? It is a question I think all could ask ourselves this week.

Since we are getting closer to Halloween, the image in my head of the times we live in from some reason is coming from the movie Ghostbusters II. I guess that is just how my head works. Remember that movie? It is a silly movie, however, the whole plot surrounds the question of why New Yorkers are so grumpy. That alone was funny. But the answer in the movie was an enormous river of evil slime running underneath New York that generated negative spiritual energy under people's feet, causing normally good people to become obnoxious and rude. I found that to be a very good image. The answer the movie gave to solve that problem was to combat that negative energy with positive energy, with love and acts of kindness. Makes sense to me.

You see, I think this river of slime underneath our feet is as good an analogy for original sin as any, an invisible evil at work in our world inclining us to be grumpy and rude to each other. How do we combat all this negativity? We combat it with loving God and loving neighbor. And like in that silly movie, conjuring up that love inside of us is really hard. The history of the world shows us how much easier it is to hate than it is to love. The love that we need to make it out of the times we live in is going to take a lot of work. It is going to have to be a choice we make. It is going to have to be something that we consciously decide each and every day, almost like an act of defiance against all the temptations to act otherwise.

How do we get there? I don't think it is a coincidence that Jesus begins first with the commandment to love God with all our heart. God is the source and font of love. We need to fill our cup with that love only God can give us. This is accomplished by strengthening our relationship with God, by worshiping God by participating in Mass here in the church or remotely if we must. We need to develop a personal relationship with Jesus. This is accomplished by making prayer a priority in our lives right now, it is more important than anything in our lives right now, calendar it into your day if you need to. The love that we need to survive right now comes from God, it comes from the cross, and it comes from the sacraments of the Church.

Once we fill our hearts with God's love, we are now ready to share it with others. How do we demonstrate that love? Again, 1 Corinthians 13 is instructive. St. Paul say, "Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, it is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, and it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Love never fails."

I believe this is something we can all contemplate this week because this is who we need to be. This journey begins with the Eucharist we receive at Mass and continues on our drive home today. It continues when we get home and at the dinner table. It continues with our prayers before bed tonight and our prayers tomorrow morning. It continues at work and in our relationships. And, if you want advice on how to vote, vote from that place of love. Vote from a place of love with God in your heart.

And we all know that the love we are called to is not easy. It is nevertheless very good medicine and in fact necessary for our salvation. You see, what separates the wheat from the chaff before the throne of God is love.