

Easter 6, Year B, Love

First Reading: Acts 10: 44-48

Epistle: 1 John 5: 1-6

Gospel: John 15: 9-17

Lots of four letter words, or rather one word lots of times.

Our society leads us into the trap of thinking that love is only about sexual love. It certainly is about that, but not just that. Love is sharing, caring, warning, protecting, comforting, teaching, exploring. Love is compassion. Love is about thinking clearly, analysing how gifts can best be used and encouraged. It is about longing for and creating beauty. The one thing it is not about is soppy emotionalism or indulgence.

Greek

- storge - parental love
- agape - act of will to do good, sharing, self-giving love, giving up for someone else's sake. caritas in Latin, charity debased by modern associations of patronizing and manipulating those seen as less materially endowed.
- philio - love of another, to be fond of, emotional
- eros - for Greeks the highest form, longing to possess perfection, lust, beauty. 'Even if eros is at first mainly covetous, in drawing near to the other, it is less and less concerned with itself, increasingly seeks the happiness of the other, is concerned more and more with the beloved. Ratz. So lust can grow into love.

Greek 4, us only 1

Agape and philio in NT.

Some characteristics of love.

Love tells us that there is something other than ourselves.

- love strangers, aliens, despised (Samaritans), neighbour as self
- love one's enemies
- to love our life is to loose it—the self-centered ego, the me first attitude. **This is** the same eternal truth told by The Buddha 5 centuries earlier than Jesus when he taught that self is illusion. Self-obsessedness is curiously lacking in nourishment.

So love is about relationships: Do we have any validity whatever if we keep ourselves to ourselves? Surely it is in our relationships that we acquire our humanity. Fully involved, no detachment. Love affects the lover as much as the loved. And therein its expense. But in the lover there is a constant source of refills. The more you give away, the more you have to give. But it has to be given away. This is love's expense.

Love is sincere. It's not like food where anything will do to fill our bellies – NO. Only authentic love will do. And that is easy to spot. You might think that those deprived of love, children with abusive adults, would be glad of any kind of love. But no. My limited work with abused young offenders makes me certain that they know when they meet authentic love.

Authentic love has no limits, no conditions. The lover can not impose conditions. No strings attached. And this is risky because we can't know what will happen. The moment we put conditions on the love we give away, it stops being love and starts being manipulative abuse. We may be joyful, surprised, delighted. We may get angry or frustrated. This is love's expense.

This morning we have evidence in the flesh of the product of love, and the evidence of our ears of the promises of love as we hear pledges to bring up James George in the way of Divine Love following the example and teaching of Jesus. We acknowledge that because we are human we don't get everything right, but at least we have standards to aim for. And we promise to do the best we can at each moment in the circumstances we find ourselves. We can do no more. Bringing up James will test your capacity for authentic love. You will get things wrong from time to time, and sooner or later you will regret it. But you will be doing the best you can. All this is the costly love, this is love's expense.

Pastors and flock. It is my job to lead you all on your spiritual journey, and like a parent I need to push you, to provoke you, to warn you (premonish you as it says in the BCP). If I am doing my job properly this will cost for you and for me. I will be frustrated, irritated. You will be frustrated and irritated, but ...

Paul: 1 Cor 4: The requirements for a good guide are reliability and accurate knowledge. It matters very little to me what you think of me, even less where I rank in popular opinion.

So I must press on and not be too affected by that, because out of the forge will come a new creation, wrought by hard work.

Parish conference

First the blackening, the consuming fire, the death of the old: *there let it for thy glory burn with inextinguishable blaze*. But then the prize, the alchemist's gold. It is hard work—yes, love has to be worked at. This is love's expense.