

19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time  
August 9, 2015

**“I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.”**

*Love- More Than a Feeling*

In the English language, we use the word ‘love’ quite a lot. For example, I love my first cup of coffee in the morning. I love my dog, Cuddles. I love my friends. I love my wife. I love God. Even though we use the same word, it is (hopefully) obvious that I do not hold the same feelings for my morning coffee that I do for my wife. All of these things denote different relationships to different people, things or God. It can all become somewhat confusing, actually.

The ancient Greeks had 6 different words that encompass what we say as ‘love.’ One of those is *Philautia*, or love of self. This is a superficial and narcissistic type of love, which is a perversion of true, real love. Next, we have *Philia*, which is a deep friendship. It is the way we feel about our closest friends. Then, there is *ludus*, or playful love. This can best be described as the feeling one gets in the initial stages of a relationship; when the heart flutters and two people are playful with each other. Fourth, we have *Eros*, which is sexual passion. For the Greeks, this indicated a loss of self-control and unbridled lust. However, there is a place for this within the context of Christian marriage, when it is married with the virtues, which we spoke of last week. Fifth, we have *Agape*, which is a selfless love shown to others. The author C. S. Lewis referred to this as ‘gift love,’ which is a gift that is freely given to others without

expectation of return. Finally, we have *Pragma*, or long-standing love. This is the type of love that we see between couples who have been married 25, 50 or more years. It's the love that not only stands the test of time, but allows people to be together throughout that time.

When 6 different types of love are expressed by the same word, confusion can set in with regard to communication, and then ideas... even ideas regarding proper activities in various types of relationships.

A part of this confusion is that many times, when we hear 'love' we think of a feeling. If we take the time to look at the 6 different types of love mentioned above, we can see that only the three most superficial types of love include feeling: *Philantia*, *Ludus* and *Eros*. Therefore, even though the fullest definition of love includes some element of feeling, feelings are the most superficial part of love.

The deeper, fuller and most fulfilling parts of love are found in *Philia*, *Agape* and *Pragma*. If we look at marriage as our first model of a loving relationship, while *Ludus* and *Eros* may spark an initial attraction between, say, a man and a woman, it is *Philia*, *Agape* and *Pragma* that make for the strongest and happiest marriages. If one or both of the couples allow *Philantia* to enter in, though, then the marriage is doomed, since that means the spouse or spouses are loving themselves more than the other.

*Philia*, or real true friendship love, is a choice we make. We do not remain friends with someone for years and years if we do not make a conscious choice to do

so. People in any relationship make mistakes, and the choice we make to forgive them and value the friendship beyond those issues is a CHOICE... that's not a feeling.

*Pragma* also involves choices. I know I am not going too far out on a limb to say that I don't think that there has ever been a marriage that has ever existed where both the spouses agreed with everything all of the time. In fact, that would be detrimental to the couple, as neither would ever learn from the other or see another point of view, or become a better person. Therefore, *Pragma* involves choices as well. Choices to stay together no matter what.

Next comes *Agape*. *Agape* is the one that takes the most conscious of the choices, since it calls us to love EVERYONE; even though we may not like them. This takes the most effort of all, I believe. This is also the type of love that Jesus has when He says that "the bread I will give is My flesh for the life of the world." Jesus here is giving nothing less than His own flesh for those whom He loves. This is self-sacrificing, unconditional love at its purest.

Within a marriage, I would dare say that *Eros*, while important, is not THE most important part. Sure, there is a unitive element, and it is also the way that procreation happens, but it pales in comparison with the other types of love in a successful marriage. In fact, according to the Kinsey institute, after crunching the numbers, we find across the board that married couples from 30-70 years old engage in the types of activity that come under the *Eros* type of love 1.5x/week, lasting about 15 minutes each session on average. So, in a year, the *average* married couple spends

about 19 ½ hours (again, this is PER YEAR) with activities related to *Eros*-type love out of 8,760 total hours in a year, which comes out to 0.02% of the average lived time of marriage per year.

Now, even though this is such a relatively small amount of time, still, the Church has always taught that the only proper place to experience the activities which come from *Eros* is between a man and a woman in a committed relationship. This is due, basically, to natural law, from which we get the complementarity of the genders. This is not a political statement, but just a statement about how God ordained creation to work.

So, with this understanding that committed married love comes less from feelings and emotions to conscious choices of the spouses to love each other in a deep and abiding way, let us now look at Christ and His love for us.

If we look to the Greek New Testament and look at all of the times that Jesus mentions 'love,' we find that He exclusively uses *Agape* or some grammatical permutation of the word. For Jesus, the only kind of love that is worth mentioning and teaching about for Him is that which is self-sacrificing, unconditional love. This type of love is the one from which all of the others flow. This is also the type of love that we are called to practice as sons and daughters of God.

How do we do this though? First and foremost, we focus on what we spoke about last Sunday... that we need to have a love of God and a well-formed virtuous conscience. Secondly, we must uphold the teachings that Christ entrusted to His

Church and lovingly and uniformly live by them. Thirdly, and both most importantly and most courageously, we must lovingly teach others this same revealed good news that Our Savior gave to us.

*Agape*-type love is not easy. When we put it into practice, we will sometimes bear being ignored, insults, misunderstandings, and at times maybe even persecution. However, our model for this is Christ Himself. When he tells us “the bread that I will give is flesh for the life of the World,” He means that He loves us so much that He will give every single part of Himself so that we may have life eternal. In fact, He even gave Himself up to death for that very *Agape* love.

So, ‘love’ means more than just a feeling. It is a choice, day in and day out, to choose to love our spouse, our family and even more so, our fellow human beings. It means that we are to love those who hate us, who persecute us and even those whom we don’t even know. It means, really, to live the true meaning of the Eucharist... that total self-giving of our lives so that others may have life as well. THAT type of love is truly more than a feeling.