

**Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time C - We were created to be loved, and to love.**  
January 30, 2022.

Fr. Smith had had enough. This last week pushed him over the edge. First there were kids from the nearby Catholic High School got arrested for having drug and alcohol at a party in the Church parking lot. Then there were the adults who mounted a smear campaign against an unwed mother on the Internet. Then the safety box in the sacristy had been broken into. All the collections from last Sunday were gone. Fr. Smith had had it with these people. He decided it was time to let it rip. So instead of giving a homily at the Sunday mass, he stood up at the pulpit and yelled out, **"You people, with your lying, your drinking, your cheating, your stealing ways, if you keep this up you are going to go to hell. Is that what you want? Do you want to go to hell? Stand up if you want to go to hell."** There was silence in the church and you could have heard a pin drop. Suddenly, John Jones stood up. Everyone gasped. Jones was the kindest, most devout member of the parish. Fr. Smith asked: "Jones, do you want to go to hell?" "No, father." "Then, why did you get up?" "Well, father, I didn't think it was right that you were the only one standing."

As silly as this joke is, it contains a horrible truth and that is the lack of love in the priest, his use of condemnation to get his points across. There is no charity in his words. We are all surrounded by so much bitter criticism. Hate demons feel empowered to unleash their venom. It was sickening. When people come to Church, they want to find a sanctuary from all these. But instead, they heard "I don't want this, you don't want that, a religion that grounds itself in fear and hatred." The priest in the story reflects many people of the present time, as well as the past times, who show absolutely no charity in the presentation of what they consider the teaching of the Church. There are blogs in the Internet written by people who claim to be Catholics that promote hostility. They lack love as Christians and certainly are not the real Catholics they are supposed to be. Of course, there is no use in arguing with these people because they are basically Gnostic. The ancient heresy of Gnosticism never went away. The Gnostic believes that he or she has the secret knowledge and anyone who disagrees has not been given the gift of true knowledge. But they don't have any knowledge at all, at least not the gift of knowledge from the Holy Spirit.

A Church that bashes people in the head is not the Church that Jesus came to found. We don't want to be part of a Church that spews hatred. Nor did St. Paul. In this Sunday's second reading (1 Corinthians 12:31 - 13:13), in his famous discourse on love, St. Paul reminds us **that love is the meaning of life, the "highest gift" and the "greatest" of virtues.** Then he gives a description of what love really is. He lists the great characteristics of **Christ-like love, the true love. "If I speak in human and angelic tongues, but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. ... if I have all faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. .... Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous... it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered... it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."**

*We know from Christ's teaching that the meaning of life can be summed up in one word: love. **We were created to be loved, and to love.** Without that, our lives burn out little by little, like a candle that can't get enough air. Pope St. John Paul II repeated this theme over and over again. He wrote in his first Encyclical: **"Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does***

***not participate intimately in it"*** (Redemptor Hominis, #10). I am sure we have all memorized the two Great Commandments: ***"Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbour as yourself."*** But what is the meaning behind those words, especially the word "love"?

No human person can be anything unless he or she reflects the image of God, the Creator. In the letter to the Hebrews 12:29, St Paul explains well: ***"He is a consuming fire of love. Without love, no matter what other kind of apparent greatness a person may have, in reality that person is nothing."*** With the consuming love of God, our actions can transform the world. January 22 was the 49th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision legalizing abortion. This precipitated the development in the USA of what Pope St. John Paul II called the "culture of death." We are so entrenched in this culture of death, violence, and the degradation of the human person that it seems impossible to change the situation. We have been told we cannot stop Planned Parenthood, cannot change the "politically correct" to the "God-correct," cannot expect people to be pure, and cannot stop our government from financing the holocaust of babies in the womb. Of course, by our own power, we cannot do anything (John 15:5). So our pro-death, anti-life enemies are correct. But God, however, can do and has done all things. ***"Thus says the Lord of hosts: Even if this should seem impossible in the eyes of the remnant of this people, shall it in those days be impossible in My eyes also?"*** (Zechariah 8:6) So we shouldn't be discouraged. Jesus already has won the victory of life over death when He died on the cross and rose from the dead ( Acts 2:24). ***God's love is as strong as death.*** (Song of Songs 8:6). Planned Parenthood and the "politically correct" are destined to fall into the same garbage dump of history as did the Third Reich and the Soviet Union. Jesus alone will stand the test of time. He alone will reign supreme. ***We are the Church. We are the ones empowered to establish the Kingdom of God. We need to put up a fight against the vitriol of our times. We can bring God's love to the world. We must be people grounded in His love. Love is active self-giving: patience, kindness, forgiveness, courage...*** We know this is the case because the pinnacle of love - Christ giving his life out of love on the cross - had nothing to do with nice feelings. Christ-like love, real love, the kind of love that lasts and gives meaning to life, is active self-giving. It is not self-centred, but other-centred because love is wishing the good of the other. ***As St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta said: "I have found the paradox that if I love until it hurts, then there is no hurt, but only more love."***

***Brothers and sisters in Christ, we are followers of Christ, we must love everybody in the same way that Christ loves us. That means we are to accept them completely, love them unconditionally, forgive them totally, and consider them extremely valuable, whether we like them or not. Love never gives up. Love endures the worst. With love, we can say, "You can throw everything at me, but I m going to keep loving you, no matter what." Dear God, today, and every day from now on, we want to surrender our heart to you. We want to learn to live our life dwelling in and be filled with your love. Help us to accept others, just as you have accepted us. Help us to love others unconditionally, just as you have loved us. Help us to forgive others totally, just as you ve forgiven us. And help us to value others as much as you value us. Help us to extend grace to and express faith in the people around us. Help us to expect the best in others, and when the worst happens, help us to endure it with grace. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen.***