

The Virtue of Love

Love is one of the three *Theological Virtues* (faith, hope, and love). These three are God's gift to us at Baptism. The theological virtue of love enables us to love God *with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbour as ourself*. (See Luke 10: 27) St. Thérèse of Lisieux once said that our call as Christians is to *be love for Love*. We have been born again at Baptism to live for Love.

Love sounds so easy, but we know that most of the time, it is hard work. It often means practicing kindness when we can find many reasons not to. Love is not a fairy tale; it can demand much of us. But in the process, practicing the virtue of love makes us better persons. It strengthens our communities and makes the world a better place. What might love look like in our lives?

Love looks like:

- the priest... getting up in the middle of the night to anoint a dying person at the hospital, coming home to preside at early morning Mass, continuing to work through the day and often into the evening.
- the parent... working long hours, preparing meals, managing a household, putting their children's needs first day after day to provide a safe and nurturing home life.
- the student... defending a classmate being teased or bullied by others, even at the risk of becoming unpopular.
- the teacher... spending extra time with a struggling pupil, marking papers at night after the kids have gone to bed so that parents are up to date on their child's progress.
- volunteers and trustees... putting in extra personal time on evenings and weekends to help their schools provide the best possible education.
- the religious or deacon... serving Christ in the poor, hungry and forgotten of our world.

We can love because God continues to love us. Each time we fail to love, Christ is there to bind up our wounds and strengthen in the Sacraments – to heal us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and to feed us with His very life at the Eucharist. We are there in turn to show God's love by forgiving, encouraging and supporting one another. St. Thérèse writes about the moment she understood that Love makes everything possible:

I knew that the Church had a heart and that such a heart appeared to be aflame with love. I knew that one love drove the members of the Church to action, that if this love were extinguished, the apostles would have proclaimed the Gospel no longer, the martyrs would have shed their blood no more. I saw and realized that love sets off the bounds of all vocations, that love is everything, that this same love embraces every time and every place. In one word, that love is everlasting.
- from the *Autobiography of Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus*

Each act of kindness, no matter how small, brings the warmth and light of Love to our home, parish, school, community and world. One day we will understand the great difference our practice of the virtue of love has made, and we will know that it was all worth it.