

**15 Pentecost  
September 10, 2023**

**Let the words of my mouth and the meditation  
of my heart be acceptable in your sight,  
O Lord my strength and my redeemer.  
Amen.**

**Sermon by Clerene Romeo**

**LOVE**

Today's readings provide us with instructions or, as I prefer to say, reminders on how to treat each other in community settings and even ourselves. It teaches us accountability, the ability to recognize the needs of others, but also our own needs and being able to ask for help from others and from God.

The gospel reading for today is titled "Pattern for Conduct in the Church". I name it, being set up by the Deacon and Sr. Warden 😊. I accept the challenge.

The reading provides instruction on resolving conflict in the church and the importance of implementing these steps in a church community. I believe the intent of these guidelines would be to prevent the misuse of one's power or the abuse of each other. The drawback of not implementing these guidelines could encourage bad behavior over a period. We ought to remind ourselves that in a community we do not represent ourselves, but we represent each other as an entity.

The steps as stated in Matthew's reading when a member of the church sins against you are:

- You point out the fault when both of you are alone.
- If you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you. This way every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses.
- If the member refuses to listen to them, tell the church.
- And finally, if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, then the offenders are labeled as sinners.

I could not help but think of my childhood. I am convinced that my mother used this technique on my 2 older brothers who were always in disagreements. Her method only had one level; either they resolved the issue themselves or she would. They usually resolved it themselves.

On a side note -This format could also be helpful for the home, family reunions, the workplace, and as a matter of fact anywhere else humans gather.

Returning to the reading, I believe God always has a better outcome. He has hope in us and believed that in that larger group, there must be at least 1 logical or spiritually inspired individual that would resolve the issue.

God created an assembly of church members knowing that, it would be resolved, His goal is to have us return to Him, and not remain in the “sinners’ status”. God’s hope for us rings out when He says, “When 2 or 3 are gathered in His name, He is in the midst - where God is, Love is.” 1 John 4:16- “God is love. He who abides in Love, abides in God and God in him.” God is full of HOPE where we, his children, are concerned and one day, we will get it!

The readings from Romans focus on this love. The love that we should have for ourselves and others, as we are reminded of the commandment. The reading states “For the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.” The commandments You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet, and any other commandment, are summed up in these words, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. Why does something that sounds so easy is so difficult to accomplish?

C.S. Lewis, a great theologian and author, breaks down the concept of love into 4 categories: affection, friendship, eros and charity. The Love we are called to show to others is AGAP love, the love of the will, the highest kind of love, not motivated by who you are, how you look or what you do.

One of C. S. Lewis quotes, that may answer the why it is so difficult to love is “to love at all is to be vulnerable”. Anything we do in life, especially being obedient to God’s call, opens us up to a certain amount of vulnerability. Most importantly, it allows us to trust God even more for it. If we are to love those that are different than we are – because that is what ALL means- then yes, we are opening ourselves up to rejections and hurts. The key is how we handle those hurts and, of course, that information is in the BIBLE of instruction. “Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you.” Luke 6: 27

Another quote of C. S. Lewis “To love at all is to be vulnerable.” “You have not chosen one another, but I have chosen you for one another.” “Gratitude looks to the Past and love to the Present; fear, avarice, lust, and ambition looks ahead.” “Do not waste time bothering whether you “love” your neighbor; act as if you did.”

An example of this love is currently being played out by a little girl named Rosalyn. When she was 5 years of age, she heard on the news that 5 officers were killed in Texas. Rosalyn, saddened and confused by this, said “Not every officer was bad” and she wanted them to know that. Rosalyn decided to travel to 50 states to hug the police officers and let them know they were loved. When a reporter asked her where she got the idea, her response was “God”. Rosalyn along with her younger brother has now been to 44 states, with 6 more left to go.

I was moved by this story and how easy it was for Roselyn to set out to accomplish the task set before her, of course, with assistance from her parents. This is an example of what Jesus was referring to – having childlike faith.

These tasks that are asked of us are never easy to accomplish alone, that is why we come together in this community, where we can support each other, learn, and grow together. One of the many things I know that we have here on the campus of St. Cyprians is the love for each other. Anyone that comes through our doors, leaves knowing that they were welcomed, accepted just the way they are, and loved. However, I would love for each one of us to allow that love to flow beyond these doors. Allow yourself to be vulnerable as you show God's love to all even if you must start out by acting...

lyrics from the song by Unspoken says:

It's easy to say what I think but it is harder to listen  
It's easy to stand on the side and avoid all the trenches  
But how we gonna love our enemies  
When we can't even love our friends  
We build walls but we're called  
To build bridges instead

Love, love, love, love  
Love is everything we need  
Love, love, love, love  
Love is what we're called to be  
We may not see eye to eye but tell me can we all agree.

“Love is everything we need.”

So as Father Ted would say... let's take seriously what Jesus took seriously.

Let's show love to ALL!

Let us pray.

O heavenly father give us the strength to let go and let you mold us to be the people you created us to be, with Jesus as our example and guide that we may learn to love and accept all that we meet. We also thank you for the vicar that you are sending to us, and for the healing of the Diocese.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord we pray. Amen