

ENCOURAGEMENT ENCOURAGEMENT



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An Easter love..



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He who loves the coming of the Lord is not he who affirms it is far off, nor is it he who says it is near. It is he who awaits it with a sincere faith, steadfast hope, and fervent love. *St Augustine*

Lent is a little like this as we await a time of Resurrection and exultation knowing that soon we will celebrate the rising from the dead of Jesus. This is also true of the second coming of Jesus. This Encouragement spans both seasons and it occurred to me that it is in these ‘in between seasons’ that we can learn much of what it means to wait with expectant joy, yet live in the present. But the in between times are also testing times when our faith and love is put to the test.

Halfway through Lent we are surely tempted to either alter, modify or relax our Lenten observances whether of fasting of giving, and/or a change of heart, metanoia... temptations abound and we are aware of our humanity and weakness. It is easy to forget that in all that we do the bottom line is **love**. We are charged with the call to love one another as Jesus said, no ifs or buts or partial statements. If whatever we do is not underlined by the sentiment of love, then it will never bear fruit in any way whatsoever. Love to be genuine not only endures, but gives.

God's Love Never Stops

In today's world love has so many meanings and definitions from ‘loving’ a good meal, a television program, a pet, a friend, a child, husband, wife or parents etc. We have almost substituted the word love to mean anything we enjoy or like... ‘though we are still moved by the extraordinary witness of an action of loving like we see in the care of someone who is sick or dying or an act of bravery required to save someone's life. We see it in the enduring of long marriages and friendship. Yes, there are still examples of selfless love! We have all been moved

by the dedication of doctors and nurses during the Pandemic and present in the generosity of nations accepting, without reserve, refugees fleeing from war such as in Poland, Moldova, Hungary and Romania and the amount of donations in money and kind that has been given. All these are an aspect of love simply because they are selfless.

As we use the word ‘love’ so very easily we find it hard to see the difference and the call to the kind of love that Jesus calls us to. Even more importantly we do not recognise what is being said when we speak of God's love for us. We say quite rightly that Jesus loves us, or that God loves us, but do we really ponder what we are saying? Do we consider why this is so very important? Do we recognise that it is the essential element of our faith? Without this there would be no Easter, there would be no second chance, that there would be no eternal life. We have almost reduced the statement to a ‘nice thing’, a platitude, rather than the utterly dynamic force that changes and transforms not only us but all of history.

There are many love stories both in literature and in reality, that elicit a response from us. We all know of Romeo and Juliet, Jane Eyre and Mr. Rochester, of Ss. Francis and Clare or Ss. Francis de Sales and Jane Francis de Chantal. They exemplify many aspects of love and inspire us. Their selfless love leads us to contemplate the true meaning of the gift of love and its selflessness and surrender to a greater love.

One story from the 11th/12th century captures another aspect of this love and returns us to the focus of Jesus love for us. Abélard was a theologian and philosopher and had a student called Héloïse. He saw in his pupil great ability at a time that women were not encouraged to aspire to any learning. Aided and

“Mount Calvary is the academy of love.” St. Francis de Sales

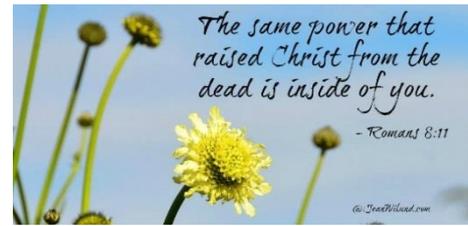
encouraged too by her uncle and guardian who was also very possessive of her she completed her studies. The couple's relationship developed into love and a child was born of the relationship. Marriage seemed impossible and Abélard tried to protect her from her over possessive uncle.

However, in order to save face the uncle relented and Abélard and Héloïse were married secretly. The Uncle's rage was such that he engineered an attack on Abélard that robbed him of his manhood. Shortly afterward he entered a monastery as a monk. He also persuaded Héloïse to do the same and become a Nun though she was more reluctant. A series of letters remains to tell us of the enduring love that they had for each other. Abélard also continued his theological work, and it is to him that we attribute the concept of Limbo. One thing however nearly destroyed Abélard. He found it difficult to accept that Héloïse loved him still, very much, and that in spite of everything. He found this impossible to accept. This had a deep effect on his spiritual life. One day while questioning this he looked for the first time at the face of Jesus at the crucifixion in the way he had not done so before. In those transforming moment he realised that she was capable of a greater love because she had accepted being loved and loved with a greater love. He understood that she was capable of this because Jesus' love had been revealed to her and she had accepted it. Abélard wrote many years later (they only met by chance once more) *'If I am remembered it will be for this, that I was loved by Héloïse'*. Though they had been physically apart all those years, at last in the sight of the other, the former lovers realised that the love they shared is the reason for human existence...

Her love brought him to realise that God love exists. God's love preempts our love and our loving is made possible by Jesus' redemptive love for us all. His is the perfect love and transcends all other. His final surrender to death was the price paid to make it possible for us to love as He does, even unto death. His rising from the dead brought forth that truth that perfect love conquers sin and death and that is what we celebrate at Easter. He rules the universe with a passionate love for all that He has created and willed, and that love can never fail. When we realise this truth, it has the power to transform our lives and live

in that peace. May we wish you this Blessing at Easter and hope that it brings you Joy. Halina Holman

Alleluia! He is Risen



Pope Francis

The God of the living! ... Before us stands the final defeat of sin and death, the beginning of a new time of joy and of endless light. But already on this earth, in prayer, in the Sacraments, in fraternity, we encounter Jesus and His love, and thus we may already taste something of the risen life. The experience we have of His love and his faithfulness ignites in our hearts like a fire and increases our faith in the resurrection. In fact, if God is faithful and loves, He cannot be thus for only a limited time: faithfulness is eternal, it cannot change. God's love is eternal, it cannot change! It is not only for a time: it is forever! It is for going forward! He is faithful forever and He is waiting for us, each one of us, he accompanies each one of us with his eternal faithfulness.

Rome 2013

PRAYER: JESUS, REDEEMER AND KING, YOUR LOVE IS UNFAILING FOR YOUR PEOPLE. RESTORE PEACE TO WAR TORN COUNTRIES AND AID THOSE IN NEED, OPENING HEARTS TO HELP THOSE SUFFERING.

Feast Days in April

2nd St. Francis of Padua

3rd **Fifth Sunday of Lent**

4th St. Isidore

7th St. John Baptist de La Salle

10th **Palm Sunday**

11th St. Stanislaus of Kraków

14th **Maundy Thursday: Mass of the Lord's Supper**

15th **Good Friday: (Fasting & Abstinence)**

16th **Easter Vigil, Holy Saturday**

17th **Easter Sunday**

18th **Easter Monday**

24th **Second Sunday, Octave of Easter:**

And Feast of the Divine Mercy

25th **St. Mark, Evangelist**

26th St. George, transferred from 23rd

28th St. Louis de Montfort

29th St. Catherine of Siena

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