

Encouragement Encouragement

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Love Letters.....Letters of Love

THE HOST APOSTOLATE

WWW.THEHOSTAPOSTOLATE.ORG

info@thehostapostolate.org

14 Goatbeck Terrace
Langley Moor
County Durham
DH7 8JJ

United Kingdom

Have you ever had to write a letter, or put down something in print and do not know how to start, your mind is blank. Everyone has this experience from time to time... well; it was the same for me this time. There are so many topics but which one to choose? As ever, the Lord comes to our rescue and by providence I heard and saw a lady proclaiming the Good News in an innovative way using the 'letter to the Romans' as base. It was so inspiring that it took me to re-read that letter again, and reflect. It seemed like God's letter to me, to pass on with my own little reflections.

What is so inspiring is its simplicity – it is a blueprint for positive Christian living, containing the do's and don'ts of trying to live a holy and pure life. Its essential elements are that we are gifted people, all part of one body. We all can, and must contribute, to the life of the community and so be blessed. St. Paul itemises certain attributes and encourages others to live the Christian message.



It starts off by reminding us of God's Mercy to us. Jesus has risen and we are saved people so we have to be full of gratitude and serve in a manner befitting people who have received great gifts. With the coming of the 'Year of God's Mercy' (Dec. 8th) it is doubly important that we reflect on all aspects of this incredible attribute of God. St. Paul reminds us that we must not conform, behave like those who simply use the practices of the world, but focus on the perfect way to live.

Interestingly he picks out key areas; Speaking God's Message, Serving, Teaching, Encouraging, Sharing, Working Hard, and Being Kind. Above all he stresses that we have to be sincere and honest in the way we perform these tasks.

"Love must be completely sincere. Hate what is evil, hold on to what is good. Love one another warmly as Christian brothers and be eager to show respect for one another..."
Romans 12 vs. 9-11

These enjoiners are not the usual do's and don'ts of morality but speak of attributes and gifts in the community – not just what we should and should not

do, but the often hidden things that make a parish or community become whole and at one and bring people together. In many ways they are higher gifts that we should preserve and encourage, but somehow they have been forgotten. They are essential to both Evangelisation and Christian community development.

We are also reminded that we must not think of ourselves as better than anyone else – or elevate our importance, in other words to be truly humble but honest, recognising the gifts that we have but not raising ourselves above others, who have different ones. This recognition leads to generosity in appraising the gifts of others and leads to a relaxed attitude in affirming others and encouraging the gifts of *all*.

We are to remain joyful and cheerful in all our service, filled with a desire to please the God who made us and died for us and will raise us up when our time comes to be with Him for all eternity.

Sharing our gifts is vital for if you think of any task, if one bit is missing the task cannot be completed. What good would a car be without an engine or mechanic to install it? Or a house without a roof? What good would a school be without the pupils, or a hospital without its nurses? Each has to be an integral part of the purpose for which it was made. These gifts, graces that are listed are not given the prominence that is required: If anything they can be resented or minimised. Anyone who has had to give a talk, homily, render a service, a collection will at some point have experienced the resentment of others. This should never be so, in a Christian atmosphere of love and acceptance and a desire to serve the Lord and each other. Indeed there is an indifference to the development of these special graces. We are told by St. Paul that we have to love and respect our fellow Christians and be open to everyone.

We must share our goods with needy Christians and have things in common. This seems a far cry, sometimes, in our parish communities and society in general. We must be prepared to open our homes and hearts to others. We have to be generous and we must

also pray at all times. During this month we will also receive the Holy Spirit in a special way at Pentecost. He is the bearer of all Gifts of the Spirit, for which we should pray.

But the bottom line of all this can be experienced through being 'lovers'. Our love has to be sincere. How do we know if our love is sincere? Well, in the first instance by our openness to others and our generosity and desire to meet the needs of others rather than ourselves. But the critical test is whether we can be so when we are rejected, devalued, ignored, abused and thought little of. It is easy to be helpful to those who are clearly both grateful and appreciative, but much more difficult when others condemn us for our positive actions. We have to bless those who persecute us – as St. Paul affirms – Yes, bless them. Difficult, surely yes, but that is the ultimate measure of the sincerity of our love. The Blessings, the 'Beatitudes' tell us of the rewards that await people who do this and they are 'grand'. But let us not put them out of reach. We are not perfect human beings but Jesus died for us, while we were still sinners and Redeems us by His Blood.

The list of gifts is in many ways ordinary, in many situations they can be found, even around a table but they have to be allowed to blossom and develop. Joyful and peace-filled people, and those trying to do good in all situations will be much blessed and bring about the Kingdom of God.

God's love letters to us, for Jesus teaches us Love in the Gospels and through the Apostles, abound with simple ways of becoming Christians. They are loving letters to His Children – us – teaching us how to make our love sincere.

Dare we send love letters back to Him?

Halina Holman



We ask the Lord to do for all of us what he did for the disciples who were afraid of joy: to open our minds: 'He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures;' Let him open our minds and help us understand that He is a living reality, that He has a body, that He is with us that he accompanies us and that He has won. We ask the Lord for the grace to not be afraid of joy."

Pope Francis, Rome 2015

Pope Francis and Spiritual Gifts

"A charism is more than a talent or personal quality. It is a grace, a gift that God gives through the Holy Spirit. Not because someone is better than the others, but rather so that he puts it at the service of others with the same gratitude and love with which he has received it. They enliven and enrich the Body of Christ. First received at one's baptism, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are traditionally referred to as wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord. Among each of these gifts are also charisms, described as the graces which the Spirit freely bestows upon the faithful for the benefit of the whole community. These gifts, while granted to individuals, are discovered and acknowledged within the wider ecclesial community. As a sign of God's superabundant love for his children, they are rich and varied, yet each is meant to serve the building up of the Church as a communion of faith and love. Diverse charisms and gifts with which the Father fills the Church are to grow in harmony, in faith and in his love, as one body only, the Body of Christ, where we each need the other, and where every received gift is fully verified when it is shared with (our) brothers. It is in this way that the "Supernatural beauty and strength of faith shines forth, so that together we may enter the heart of the Gospel and follow Jesus.

Let us ask the Lord to help us recognize with gratitude this great outpouring of spiritual gifts which enables the Church to persevere in faith, to grow in grace and to be an ever more credible sign and witness of God's infinite love. Rome 2014

Prayer

You are at work in those who spread the gospel, confirming the truth of their message; help us to manifest your resurrection by our way of living. – *Lord, may your resurrection enrich us with your grace.*

Divine Office

Papal Prayer for May

That Mary's intercession may help Christians in secularised cultures be ready to proclaim Jesus.

Feasts in May

Ascension Sunday, 17th

Pentecost Sunday, 24th

St. Joseph the Worker 1st,

Our Lady of Fatima 13th,

St. Matthias, Apostle 14th,

St. Philip Neri 26th,

St. Augustine of Canterbury 27th,

We are at present supporting five projects in areas of deprivation and/or persecution. We need **your** help to continue funding these projects, especially postage costs for goods sent.

Can you help in us in any other way and join the team and be involved in Evangelisation?

Blessings and joy to all at Pentecost!

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