

## We Owe Each Other Nothing But

To Love

Saint Paul tells us in our second reading:

“Brothers and Sisters owe nothing to anyone except to love one another, for the one who loves one another has fulfilled the law.”

Is there any word over used or made trivial than the word love? I recently read an article that made a great point that we have today a far greater vocabulary to express the word coffee .... Then we do love. There is cappuccino, expresso, skinny latte, or an iced caramel macchiato.

No wonder we may sort of hear the words of Paul and somehow find it sappy, and not see the real commitment Paul is calling us too.

The point of the article was to talk about the 6 words that Ancient Greeks used for the word love. It would be too long to go over all of them here. But I really urge you this week to meditate on Saint Paul's words, "that we owe nothing to anyone except to love one another." And to look up the six words for love by the ancient Greeks. But let me briefly hit on 3 of them. One is Philia and is a deep comradely friendship and bond that develops for example among those who fight side by side in battle. It may in wartime or for a cause. It involves sacrificing for each other, showing loyalty and sharing emotions among themselves.

The other word is pragma or longstanding love it is a realistic mature love that is shared among long established couples. It is about showing patience and tolerance and working to a point of compromise. Many of you may have heard the story of the wife who was married to her husband for many

years and was asked, “Did you ever consider divorcing your husband.” She said “No I thought sometimes of murdering him but never divorce.” Perhaps that is a good example of Pragma love.

But the one that is most radical and counter cultural and the one that Saint Paul is calling us to in today’s reading is Agape Love:

This love extends to all people, whether family members or strangers. Agape was later translated into Latin as caritas which we get our word charity from. C.S. Lewis referred to it as “Gift Love’ the highest form of Christian love.

The article ends the summary of Agape love with this statement and it is said far better than anything I could say:

“There is growing evidence that agape is in dangerous decline in many countries. Empathy levels in the U.S have declined sharply over the past 40 years, with the steepest

fall occurring in the past decade. We urgently need to revive our capacity to care.

That is a powerful quote ..... And it should make us reflect on what else happened in the world and our country in that time period. It is no coincidence that this is happening as the world and the U.S is either turning from the Word of God or just giving God lip service or no service at all.

Caring and showing agape love as Jesus shows us in our Gospel reading is not always going along to get along or keeping tabs on the latest poll or clinging to the people who agree with us. Our views and even our disagreements should be settled by holding up our views to the teaching of Christ and the Church that Jesus left us.

We have a responsibility to continually convert ourselves to the Lord and as our First reading tells us we will be held responsible for wrong doing if we do not try to correct it.

Everything we do must be done in agape love ..... not for personal praise or personal reward but rather for the love of our God. And ultimately our brothers and sisters.

That is why Mother Church entrusts each of us with the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. It is both taking care of the physical needs and also the souls of the people we meet. No greater way can we express our agape love to people. Let me leave you with these acts of mercy:

The corporal works are: Feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, visit the sick, bury the dead, give to the poor and give drink to the thirsty.

The spiritual works are: Counseling the doubtful, instructing those who lack spiritual knowledge, admonish the sinner, comfort the sorrowful, forgiving injuries, bearing wrongs patiently, praying for the living and the dead.

We certainly on an individual level are able to do all these things but let us pray for the Spirit to guide each of us to where we are called to help. Each of us doing a part as members of Christ's church can accomplish many things.

There is this saying that the sign of a vibrant Church is not a few people doing many things but rather many people doing a few things.

