

Word & Song – One Life One Love

Readings from the July 11, 2024 Concert

Scripture: A reading from the First Letter of St. John (4:11-21)

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of his own Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son as the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. In this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because He first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also.

Meditation: A reading from St. Maximilian Kolbe's letter to a fellow priest.

We need to love our neighbor not just because he is pleasant or helpful or rich and influential or even because he shows us gratitude. These motives are too self-serving, unworthy of our Lady's Knights. Genuine love rises above creatures and soars up to God. In him, by him, and through him it loves all men, both good and wicked, friends and enemies. To all it stretches out a hand filled with love; it prays for all, suffers for all, wishes what is best for all, desires happiness for all—because that is what God wants.

...Let us remember that love lives through sacrifice and is nourished by giving. Let's remember that not everything which is good and beautiful pertains to genuine, essential love, because even without those other things love can be present, indeed a perfected love. Without sacrifice there is no love. Sacrifice the senses, taste, hearing, and above all, the mind and the will in holy obedience. I wish for you and for myself the best appreciation of sacrifice which is the unconditional willingness to sacrifice.

Scripture: A reading from the book of Deuteronomy (6:4-9)

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Meditation: A reading by Franz Jägerstätter who wrote this letter to his family from a Nazi prison in red crayon on an unfolded piece of stiff paper.

My dear loved ones, the hour draws ever nearer when I shall give my soul back to God, the Lord. I could say many words of farewell to you, and it is hard to imagine saying no more good-byes to you.

I would have gladly spared you the pain and the suffering that you have borne on account of me. But you surely know that we must love God more than we love our family, and that we must be ready to let go of everything that we love on this earth and that is dear to us rather than to offend God in the least...

What must a farewell [at death] be for those people who do not fully believe in eternal life and who, therefore, do not have much hope for a reunion? If I could not have trusted in God's mercy and forgiveness for all of my sins, then I would have hardly had peaceful days during my solitary time in prison.

Therefore, I have nothing more urgent to set before you than that you resolve to keep all of the Commandments and to avoid every sin. You should love God, our Lord, and also your neighbors as yourself (cf. Mk. 12:28-34). On these two Commandments rest the entire law. Keep these, and then we have reason to hope for an imminent reunion in heaven.

Out of my own experience I can say that life is painful when one lives as a lukewarm Christian. To exist in this way is to have more the existence of a vegetable than truly to live...I would not exchange my small, dirty cell for a king's palace if I was required to give up even a small part of my faith. All that is earthly—no matter how much, nor how beautiful—comes to an end. But God's Word is eternal.

Now my dear children, when your mother reads you this letter, your father will already be dead...Be well-behaved and obedient children. Pray for your father so that we shall see each other soon in heaven!

Scripture: A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Romans (5:3-9)

We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

While we were yet helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man—though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. But God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we are now justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God.

Meditation: A reading by St. John Henry Newman, with a meditation on the Seventh Station of the Cross: Christ Falls a Second Time.

The pain of His wounds and the loss of blood increasing at every step of His way, again His limbs fail Him, and He falls on the ground.

What has He done to deserve all this? This is the reward received by the long-expected Messiah from the Chosen People, the Children of Israel. I know what to answer. He falls because I have fallen. I have fallen again. I know well that without Thy grace, O Lord, I could not stand; and I fancied that I had kept closely to Thy Sacraments; yet in spite of my going to Mass and to my duties, I am out of grace again. Why is it but because I have lost my devotional spirit and have come to Thy holy ordinances in a cold, formal way, without inward affection. I became lukewarm, tepid. I thought the battle of life was over and became secure. I had no lively faith, no sight of spiritual things. I came to church from habit, and because I thought others would observe it. I ought to be a new creature, I ought to live by faith, hope, and charity; but I thought more of this world than of the world to come—and at last I forgot that I was a servant of God, and followed the broad way that leadeth to destruction, not the narrow way which leadeth to life. And thus I fell from Thee.

Scripture: A reading from the gospel of St. John (15:9-14)

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.

Meditation: A reading from Fr. Paul de Jaeger, from The Virtue of Trust.

For my sake Jesus, my dear crucified, my beloved hangs there; for my sake He is dying...

Later when I have somewhat absorbed this truth; when my heart shall be seized of it, then shall Jesus stand before me wholly transfigured, ravishing me irresistibly, incomparable in the kingliness of His love.

Truly Jesus of the Agony is indeed the King of love, the incomparable King of love. In comparison with him all human love is vanity. Before Jesus crucified the most famous of Earth's loves grow pale, even as the light of the stars dwindles and dies at the sun's approach...

Jesus crucified is the acme of love: than this there is nothing nobler, nothing vaster... in linea amoris – 'in the lineage of love.' It is love's masterpiece.

...In this marvelous and triumphant manifestation of His incomparable love Jesus is infinitely lovely, infinitely adorable. In the whole of creation is to be found no spectacle as lovely as that of my God of love... there is nothing to equal the indescribable fascination of this drama of Calvary.

Scripture: A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Romans (8:18, 24-25, 28, 31-39)

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us... Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose.

What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will He not also give us all things with him? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written,

“For thy sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Meditation: A reading from Fr. Walter J. Ciszek, a prisoner of religious conscience in a Soviet Gulag.

God cares for each of us individually, watches over us, provides for us. The circumstances of each day of our lives, of every moment of every day, are provided for us by Him... But maybe we are just a little afraid to accept it in all its shattering simplicity, for its consequences in our lives are both terrible and wonderful.

...Every moment of our life has a purpose, ... every action of ours, no matter how dull or routine or trivial it may seem in itself, has a dignity and a worth beyond human understanding. No man's life is insignificant in God's sight, nor are his works insignificant—no matter what the world or his neighbors or family or friends may think of them. Yet what a terrible responsibility is here. For it means that no moment can be wasted, no opportunity missed, since each has a purpose in man's life, each has a purpose in God's plan...

Nothing, not even death, can separate us from God. Nothing can touch us that does not come from His hand, nothing can trouble us because all things come from His hand. Is this too simple, or are we just afraid really to believe it, to accept it fully and in every detail of our lives, to yield ourselves up to it in total commitment? This is the ultimate question of faith. And each must answer it for himself in the quiet of his

heart and the depths of his soul. But to answer it in the affirmative is to know a peace, to discover a meaning to life, that surpasses all understanding.

Scripture: A reading from the book of Revelations (3:15-22)

I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may be rich, and white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Meditation: A reading from the diaries of St. Faustina Kowalska.

St. Faustina writes, "Our nothingness and our misery are drowned in Your greatness. O infinite goodness, who can ever praise You sufficiently? Can there be found a soul that understands You in Your love? O Jesus, there are such souls, but they are few.

O my Lord, my soul is the most wretched of all, and yet You stoop to it with such kindness! I see clearly Your greatness and my littleness, and therefore I rejoice that You are so powerful and without limit, and so I rejoice greatly at being so little.

O soul steeped in darkness, do not despair. All is not yet lost. Come and confide in your God, who is love and mercy.

Let no one doubt concerning the goodness of God; even if a person's sins were as dark as night, God's mercy is stronger than our misery. One thing alone is necessary: that the sinner set ajar the door of his heart, be it ever so little, to let in a ray of God's merciful grace, and then God will do the rest."

Jesus responds to St. Faustina, "When a soul sees and realizes the gravity of its sins, when the whole abyss of the misery into which it immersed itself is displayed before its eyes, let it not despair, but with trust let it throw itself into the arms of My mercy, as a child into the arms of its beloved mother. These souls have a right of priority to My compassionate Heart, they have first access to My mercy. I delight particularly in a soul which has placed its trust in My goodness.

I am mercy itself; therefore, I ask you to offer Me your misery and this very helplessness of yours and, in this way, you will delight My Heart."

Meditation: A reading from St. Augustine of Hippo's Homilies on the First Epistle of John.

If you keep silent, keep silent by love; if you speak, speak by love; if you correct, correct by love; if you pardon, pardon by love; let love be rooted in you, and from the root nothing but good can grow. Love and do what you will.

Love endures in adversity, is moderate in prosperity; brave under harsh sufferings, cheerful in good works; utterly reliable in temptation, utterly open-handed in hospitality; as happy as can be among true brothers and sisters, as patient as you can get among the false one's.

The soul of the scriptures, the force of prophecy, the saving power of the sacraments, the fruit of faith, the wealth of the poor, the life of the dying.

What could be more magnanimous than to die for the godless, what more kindly than to love one's enemies? It is the one thing that is not cast down by another's good fortune, because it is not jealous. It is the one thing

that its own good fortune does not puff up, because it is not conceited. It is the one thing that is not pricked by a bad conscience, because it does not act boastfully. It is steady and unshaken amid reproaches, it is well-disposed in the face of hatred; calm in the face of anger, innocent in the midst of intrigues, groaning in the midst of iniquity, breathing again in the presence of truth. What could be braver than charity, not for paying back insults, but for not caring about them? What could be more faithful, not for vanity, but for eternity?

You see, the reason it endures all things in the present life, is that it believes all things about the future life; and it endures everything that is inflicted on it here, because it hopes for everything that is promised it there. Rightly does it never fall away. So pursue after charity, and by thinking holy thoughts about it, bring forth the fruits of justice.

Scripture: A reading from the First letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians (13:1-13)

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Meditation: A reading from the Sonnets of William Shakespeare (#116)

Let me not to the marriage of true minds

Admit impediments; love is not love

Which alters when it alteration finds,

Or bends with the remover to remove.

O no, it is an ever-fixèd mark

That looks on tempests and is never shaken;

It is the star to every wand'ring bark

Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.

Love's not time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks

Within his bending sickle's compass come.

Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,

But bears it out even to the edge of doom:

 If this be error and upon me proved,

 I never writ, nor no man ever loved.