

30th Sunday of the Year (A)
(Exodus 22:20-26 / Matthew 22:34-40)
25.10.2026
Love

Many centuries ago, the Lord declared to the prophet Ezekiel: “I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” (36:26) Why is it that such cardiac surgery seemed to matter so much to God?

The fact is that to know God is not just to have ideas and opinions about him; it is not just about following rules and being law-abiding, but it is essentially and necessarily about love because, as St John reminds us “God is love” (1Jn 4:8). To love from our heart, not only from our head, is the surest way for us to reconnect with the image and likeness of God within us; it is, according to St Paul “to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ” (Eph 4:15).

To reflect on love is to deal with the core of our identity. So it should be clear to all of us that we do not love because we want to feel good about ourselves, or even because we want to be loved but because love is what we are called to be, what we long to be. We know intuitively that only love makes us fully alive. And this explains why the Anglo-Irish poet David Whyte can write: “Throughout the centuries (...) we never tire of talking about, celebrating or lamenting the pangs of love, requited or unrequited. In all our songs, our poetry and our dramas (...): it’s always love, love, love one way or another (...). Love is the very atmosphere from which we breathe.” (*Consolations II*, p. 166)

Unfortunately because of sin and woundedness at work within us, while we thirst for love, we do not always go to the right tap. Love may be manipulated, distorted, disfigured. One’s love for country and culture may lead to extreme forms of nationalism; one’s legitimate need for security may be used to justify millions of pounds poured into the armament industry; one’s healthy longing for self-esteem may engender narcissistic and destructive traits and attitudes.

The Italian poet Dante wrote with insight: “So you can understand how love must be the seed of every virtue growing in you and every deed that merits punishment” (*Divine Comedy, Purgatory*, XVII:103-105, p. 184). Yes at the root of everything, there is love, whether it is for good or for bad. It is why it is important to be reminded that love is not first a feeling but an ethical decision, a moral compass, a conscious choice for life, for our own life and that of those around us, for the now and for the future that we want to build together. The present situation of the world shows us eloquently that pride, fears, self-reliance, mistrust, envy do not foster life. St Paul reminds us that only “love builds up” (1 Co 8:1).

If love matters so much to who we are, if it is the driving-force of all that we do and say, why is it so difficult for us to allow it to flow in and through us like “the river of the water of life” (cf. Rev 22:1)?

I found the beginning of an answer, not the whole answer, in David Whyte’s book already quoted. The poet wrote: “Love is a form of unilateral disarmament: an instinctual willingness for vulnerability (...); love is frightening exactly because it overwhelms and disarms us.” (*Id.*, p. 161)

The problem is that love is disarming and so makes us feel vulnerable. Does it really?

Yes Love is disarming. Love brings down the walls we erect in order to protect ourselves and which in fact imprison us; love removes the heart of stone which keeps us

stuck in attitudes of unforgiveness and revenge, the heart of stone which leaves us uncaring towards others, the heart of stone which is driven by fears and leads us to hide ourselves behind lies and manipulation. So yes love disarms us from all the defence mechanisms that are illusory and self-harming, that ultimately cut us off from God; love also frees us from the false security that cuts us off from others and from our real selves and prevents us from being fully alive.

Love frees us in order to make us really strong with the strength of God himself. When St Paul says that he wants “to know the power of Christ’s resurrection” (Phil 3:10), he longs to know the power of God’s love that restores to life. St Paul goes on to remind us that, in Christ, we have been given “an armour of light” (Rm 13:12) so that we are equipped “for the work of ministry” (Eph 4:12). As St Oscar Romero declared: “Let us not tire of preaching love; it is the force that will overcome the world. Though we see that waves of violence succeed in drowning the fire of Christian love, love must win out; it is the only thing that can.” (*Hom.* 25.09.1977)

Disarmed by love of all that leads to death, we remember that, as Jesus promised us, we “have been clothed with power from on high” (Lk 24:49), equipped by the Spirit that gives life.

For all of us, the challenge is to remain “rooted and grounded in love” (Eph 3:16) because there is our strength, our wisdom and our peace. We have to cling to the advice St Augustine gave to his people: “Let us lay hold on the two wings of love. What are the two wings of love? The love of God, and of our neighbour.” (*Exp. On Ps.*, 194:5, p. 496) The wings of love alone will help us to deal in a life-giving, fruitful and truly evangelical way with all the challenges that we face today in our families, Churches and society.