

## Homily for 4th Sunday Ordinary Time

January 29th and 30th 2022

*Weaving the Thread of Love into the Fabric of our Lives*

In Act Five scene five of Shakespeare's Macbeth, we have one of the Bard's most famous soliloquys. Macbeth opines:

*To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.*

After hearing that his wife has died, Macbeth takes stock of his own indifference to the event. Death—our return to dust—seems to him merely the last act of a very bad play, an idiot's tale full of bombast and melodrama ("sound and fury"), but without meaning ("signifying nothing"). The monotonous "To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow" conveys the mechanical beat of time as it carries this poor player-king from scene to scene leading him to conclude, that in the end, life signifies nothing.

How we think of our lives is very much influenced by what we understand to be their deeper and underlying meaning. Is there a master play-write and director whose skillful care is shaping and leading life somewhere? Or are we, so to speak, on the meaningless stage of make believe? A life that in the end signifies nothing!

How we answer this question makes all the difference to how we live this and every day.

If we do not grasp that the deeper meaning of life is to be governed by love, then all of life can be like sewing with a needle that has no thread.... It will in the end signify nothing and the sewing will have been pointless.

If, on the other hand, the thread of love is woven into the very fabric of our lives then we needn't reach Macbeth's anguished conclusion that

*"life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, Signifying nothing,"*

Rather we will discern:

*<sup>12</sup>For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. <sup>13</sup>And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.<sup>1</sup>*

Ancient Corinth was a centre for mirror manufacturing. But ancient mirrors were unlike the ones we have in the bathroom. Rather than being made from glass they were made from burnished bronze. And while

the image would have represented the person, it would have been somewhat distorted so you could not see your image clearly. Paul is drawing a comparison. Just as the Corinthians would have seen dimly through their mirrors, similarly this is our present experience of God.

Paul says that for us to see God in the present is like the mirror analogy. We see and perceive Him, but his Presence is a mediated presence. He is not immediately present to us. Rather his presence is mediated through the sacraments and through our loving actions.

We know the day will come when we see God, who is love, face to face. When that day comes, we no longer will need faith and hope, the theological virtues that help us to see partially the reality of God in this life. They will pass away because God will be immediately present to us – and the greatest theological virtue, love, will be complete and fulfilled. This is because we will literally be “In Love”.

Therefore, in this life we want to intentionally weave the thread of love through the fabric of our daily relationships. For if we intentionally do this each day, we will realize that at life’s end it will not be, so to speak, the extinguishing of a candle bringing this senseless life to its tragic termination. Rather we will know that in sewing the thread of love through all our earthly life we will then be made ready to be perfected in love to the see the Blessed Trinity face to face and know immediately and permanently the One who is love.

But Paul cautions us. Be careful how you live. People who profess belief in Jesus can in the end be sewing without the thread of love. Such faith says Paul is a noisy gong or clanging cymbal. It is no better than the worship happening in the Corinthian Pagan Shrines.

What is such empty faith like? Well on the outside it may appear very impressive and sincere. We may give to the poor, we may speak in tongues, we may have gifts of prophecy and supernatural faith, but if none of this is governed by love such a faith is full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

Paul then goes on to show us that true belief will be the needle that weaves the thread of God’s love into the fabric of every day. Such a faith will be lived out where love will be both patient and kind.

The patience to which Paul refers to here is to be understood in relation to people. In the King James Version, the word we have translated as patience is much more vivid, “long suffering”. Notice St. Paul then goes on to group with this long-suffering love, attitudes and actions that do not represent love. They are stated in the negative because these traits are the opposite of patience.

***love is not jealous or boastful; <sup>5</sup>it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup>it does not rejoice at wrong***

Such a list is helpful because if we can identify ways in which we are acting out these impatient and disordered traits we can examine our conscience and seek to understand why this is. This is where it can be wise to seek the counsel of a director, someone who is a priest or a mature lay person –who can talk and listen to us as we try to understand how and why these negative traits can get the better of us. When looking at this list we may indeed admit how impatient we really are.

But love is not only patient, it is also kind. How does Paul describe such kindness?

***Love rejoices in the right. <sup>7</sup>Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. <sup>8</sup>Love never ends;***

Paul personifies love to explain its true nature and greatness. Because love (charity) is a virtue that is supernatural and God-given, it cannot be reduced to a feeling or emotion that comes and goes over time. It is foremost the love of God and neighbor that the Spirit pours into our hearts.

At the beginning of this passage St Paul says of love “I will show you the still more excellent way”. This translation does not capture the Greek accurately. For a more literal translation would be “I will show you the most excellent way”. The way of love is superlative, there is nothing like it.

For McBeth he had so lost his way and so concluded there is no path, no meaning or purpose in life. How different from the poetry of the Apostle who confidently declares that one day the partial will come to an end and the completion of our earthly way will usher us into the fullness of Love Himself. May this inspire us to weave the thread of love into the fabric of our lives this and every day.