

28. November 2021

## Growing in love

1 Tess 3:12–4:2

***"Brethren, may the Lord increase and enrich your love for each other and for all, so that it matches ours for you. And may he so confirm your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless in the sight of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones. Finally, brothers, we urge you and appeal to you in the Lord Jesus; we instructed you how to live in the way that pleases God, and you are so living; but make more progress still. You are well aware of the instructions we gave you on the authority of the Lord Jesus."***

Love is the most supreme of gifts, as St. Paul himself tells us in another passage of his letters (1 Cor 13:13). The reason for this is because God himself is love, and it is in loving that we are most like him.

*"For this reason I tell you that her sins, many as they are, have been forgiven her, because she has shown such great love",* says the Lord about the sinful woman (Lk 7:47).

Thus, the main goal of all our efforts should be to grow in love: to love God and to love our neighbour in God's love.

In the "Message of God the Father" to Mother Eugenia Ravasio - a private revelation with ecclesiastical approval that I have often quoted - the Father says thus:

*"For Me, your sins are like iron, and your acts of love like gold. If you gave Me a thousand pounds of iron, it would not be like giving Me just ten pounds of gold! In other words, with just a little love, great iniquities can be expiated."*

From this security that God's love offers us, our own capacity to love increases. Indeed, those who know they are loved can let themselves fall into this love and thus grow in courage to love in return.

In fact, it takes courage to love, because love makes you vulnerable... A total "yes" to God implies that He makes us sharers in His Cross, and a total "yes" to neighbourly love implies that our neighbour can hurt us. If I do not take these risks, I will not be able to take the step towards a total gift of love. But if I do, I will learn that *"love endure whatever comes."* (1 Cor 13:7). Yes, love itself becomes the source from which love always emanates anew and in all circumstances. In this way, the heart is consolidated and strengthened, and, as the Apostle assures us, it is prepared to receive the Lord.

St. Paul exhorts us to perfection; this means that we must progress in love. Indeed, we can

never love enough, because love comes from God and we can never surpass Him. Some saints made the decision to always opt for the greatest love, as far as they could recognise it. This is a courageous step, the consequences of which will be far-reaching, because then we will have to learn from the Holy Spirit to recognise which is the greater love, until this choice becomes more and more natural.

Is this too bold a step? No, because with each time I decide for love, the power of the Holy Spirit will grow in me, enabling me to take the next step. Of course, we have to learn to understand what love really is, and we cannot confuse it with a mere feeling. But to the extent that we learn to love more and more, St. Augustine's words, "Love and do what you will!" can become a reality. For it will be love that will drive our will...

With this first Sunday of Advent, we begin this time of preparation for the "Feast of Love", as we can call Christmas. It is a time of special grace, in which we can exercise ourselves in love. Perhaps we can give a great gift to the Lord and ask Him to deign to increase our love for Him and for our neighbour - He will certainly be pleased with this request, for indeed He came into the world to reveal God's love to us! By growing in this love and acting on it, the light of the Lord will be able to shine more brightly in the world.