

Pro-Cathedral

3 November 2021

Welcome

As we know from listening to the Letter to the Romans over the last few weeks, St Paul can be deep and hard to follow. From time to time, however, he writes with great simplicity and directness.

Topic

Our first reading today is a very good example.

Steps

When St Paul wrote to the Romans, he had never been to the capital city of the Roman Empire. He had heard, however, that the community was deeply divided...he even says the different groups looked down on each other and despised one other. All the more did they need his core message: love is the fulfilment of the Law. By "Law", Paul meant our life with God, as described in the Bible.

This is not the first time he teaches the message of love. Already in the letter to the Galatians, he wrote to them as follows:

For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." (Galatians 5:14)

If that were not enough, he devotes a really beautiful hymn to love in the first letter to Corinthians, often read at weddings. It begins with the words,

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful. (1 Corinthians 13:4-5)

One powerful way to feel the force of that is to put your own name in instead of the word love (attempt it!). That meditation ends with the famous words,

And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13)

The message is clear and highly consistent with last Sunday's Gospel when Jesus was asked which was the greatest commandment: love God and love your neighbour.

Conclusion

I won't pretend that this is always easy. On the contrary, it can be hard to love difficult people, who can be angry and contrary and just upsetting. All the same, by loving we become more deeply human, we experience joy and we grow in inner freedom. Not only that, we come near to God. As St John writes, who loves lives in God and God lives in them, because God is love.