

## 31<sup>st</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time



Love is one of the most confusing words in our use of language. We speak of love of cars, of desserts, or a favorite book. All these describe a self-gratification, and sometimes at the expense of others. Today's readings take a different approach. They define love as a care and concern for the other. They see love as an action plan for the benefit of others. Love is a risky undertaking because it implies the obligation to demonstrate love by appropriate action. Love is never passive, never abusive, and never self-serving.

The first reading understands Yahweh as a king and Israel as servant. After telling of the king's generosity to the servant, the attitude of the king is spelled out in particular obligations. It speaks of fear of the Lord. This is not shrinking from but means to revere and respect the Lord. The whole of the reading implies God's exclusive claim on Israel, a claim that reveals itself in concrete actions. The main point is not our loving God, but that God loves us.

The psalm is King David's response to God who intervened to save him from his enemies. The point of the psalm is to praise Yahweh for his support and concern. Israel answers by applying titles to God: rock, fortress, and shield. God's covenantal loyalty ("steadfast love") takes the form of physical aid.

In the second reading, God's love is expressed in the new covenant. Unlike the former priests, who needed to be replaced due to death, the permanent high priest, Jesus, promises to remain with us always. His sacrifice on the cross is continuous so that atonement for our sins is also continuous. God's love for us is evident.

In the Gospel, Jesus reduces the 613 precepts of the Jewish faith down to just two: love of God and of neighbor. Jesus exemplified this love by reaching out to those despised by others. He loved his father by accepting his father's will even to suffering and death. This is selfless love in action.

We start to live up to this commandment by asking who have we promised to love? More often than not, we fail in the little things. Today's readings call us to renew our promise to love. The world needs-and God demands-selfless and caring love in action.