

SACRED HEART OF JESUS: Mercy in action

Pope Francis says... In a lyrical passage of Saint Paul, we see some of the features of true love:



*“Love is patient, love is kind;
love is not jealous or boastful;
it is not arrogant or rude.
Love does not insist on its own way,
it is not irritable or resentful;
it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right.
Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all
things, endures all things”* (1 Cor 13:4-7).

Love is experienced and nurtured in the daily life of. It is helpful to think more deeply about the meaning of this Pauline text and its relevance for the concrete situation of every one of us...

Love is patient

This does not simply have to do with “enduring all things”... Its meaning is that God is “slow to anger” (Ex 34:6; Num 14:18). It refers, then, to the quality of one who does not act on impulse and avoids giving offense. We find this quality in the God of the Covenant, who calls us to imitate him also in our everyday life. Saint Paul’s texts using this word need to be read in the light of the Book of Wisdom (cf. 11:23; 12:2, 15-18), as leaving open the possibility of repentance, yet insists on his power, as revealed in his acts of mercy. God’s “patience”, shown in his mercy towards sinners, is a sign of his real power.

Being patient does not mean letting ourselves be constantly mistreated, tolerating physical aggression or allowing other people to use us. We encounter problems whenever we think that relationships or people ought to be perfect, or when we put ourselves at the centre and expect things to turn out our way. Then everything makes us impatient, everything makes us react aggressively. Unless we cultivate patience, we will always find excuses for responding angrily. We will end up incapable of living together, antisocial, unable to control our impulses, and our families will become battlegrounds. That is why the word of God tells us: “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, with all malice” (Eph 4:31). Patience takes root when I recognize that other people also have a right to live in this world, just as they are. It does not matter if they hold me back, if they unsettle my plans, or annoy me by the way they act or think, or if they are not everything I want them to be. Love always has an aspect of deep compassion that leads to accepting the other person as part of this world, even when he or she acts differently than I would like. (from *Amoris Laetitia* 90-92)

The Word of God says...

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Col 3: 12-17)