

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Feb 14th 2015

Memorial of Saints Cyril, Monk, and Methodius, Bishop

Today, many people around the world offer flowers, candy, gifts, or greeting cards to their loved ones, symbolic of the love and appreciation they feel for one another. Love is that mad passion that drives us to relish life, climb mountains, go scuba diving, serve others without thought of reward, sit at table with the homeless in a soup kitchen, or offer your share of ice cream to that little kid staring at you with big eyes. Our good friend, the Bard, said that “Love is merely a madness and, I tell you, deserves as well a dark house and a whip as madmen do: and the reason why they are not so punished and cured is that the lunacy is so ordinary that the whippers are in love too” (As You Like It, 3.2).

I believe Jesus’ call to holiness was intertwined with his passionate love for people that led him to laugh with his friends as they walked through the wheat fields, enjoy wedding feasts, touch lepers, and cry when his buddy Lazarus passed away. While the people listened to his parables and insights with bated breath, he was sensitive to their physical needs as well, and in today’s gospel he blesses the loaves and fish to feed four thousand. Love moved him to action – “My heart is moved with pity for the crowd... if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will collapse on the way.” They ate and were satisfied.

This same love of Jesus flowed through the veins of Cyril and Methodius, two brothers whom the Church remembers fondly today for their work as missionaries and teachers of the Slavic people in the ninth century. The two brothers took up the challenge when the Duke of Moravia (today’s Czech Republic) requested Emperor Michael for ecclesiastical autonomy and political independence from German rule. Sensitive to the needs of the people of the cultures in that area, they invented new alphabets, translated the Gospels, and developed a Slavonic liturgy, later approved by Pope Adrian II. Cyril and Methodius, passionate about their work and in love for their people, worked with zeal in spite of much opposition from conservative German clergy. They were named co-patrons of Europe by Pope John Paul II in 1980.

Let us offer a quick prayer now:

Dear God, fill my heart with your love, forgiveness, and compassion. Walk with me today, at home and at work, and put a smile on my face. Help me to be sensitive to the needs of others and treat them as Jesus would. Amen

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