

February 2, 2025 – Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

**LOVE AND TRUTH by Pastor Julio Romero**

**Gospel: Luke 4:21-30**

The second Bible reading and the Gospel for today present a stark contrast between human nature and divine love and truth.

The second reading, which we heard today, comes from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, a well-known passage. It is especially popular in wedding ceremonies. On the other hand, the Gospel would not typically be chosen for such an occasion. However, when we consider both readings together, we gain a deeper understanding of the true value of love and the profound truth of the Gospel.

For this reason, I would like to repeat the long definition of love that Paul gives.

He said, *"If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup>And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup>If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

*<sup>4</sup>Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant <sup>5</sup>or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup>it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. <sup>7</sup>It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

*<sup>8</sup>Love never ends. "*

The Apostle Paul offers a beautiful definition of love, and what we see in today's Gospel text contrasts with that definition. Of all the qualities of love that Paul describes, none of them were shown to Jesus on the day He joined in worship with His own people in Nazareth.

He told them that what was written in the Book of Isaiah, which the Lord had read and made known, was being fulfilled that day. He proclaimed that He had been anointed by the Holy Spirit to bring good news to the poor, to liberate the captives, to restore sight to the blind, and to free the oppressed. He said all of this was about Him and that the scripture He read had been fulfilled in their hearing. It was then that the people asked, "Is this not Joseph's son?" They didn't believe He was the

Messiah, the Anointed One. To them, hearing such a claim was blasphemy—an offense—and they became angry when Jesus spoke to them about their doubts.

In that moment, according to Paul's definition of love, those people were nothing. Despite being good believers, good neighbours, and knowledgeable about the Scriptures and life in general, they were nothing. Why? Because there was no love in their hearts. They were offended by the truth Jesus spoke and sought to harm Him. They even wanted to kill Him, as the Gospel tells us.

Jesus could have said nothing, allowing them to continue in their unbelief. He could have left the synagogue to avoid upsetting His neighbours and friends. But instead, He spoke the truth to them. The One who is the Truth spoke the truth about their doubts, knowing it would upset them.

Telling the truth is what our Lord Jesus always did. He spoke the truth to King Herod, to the Pharisees and other enemies, to Caiaphas the High Priest who arrested Him, and to Pontius Pilate who condemned Him to die on the cross. All of these people had one thing in mind: to harm Him. Yet, despite the danger of telling the truth, He did not remain silent.

Jesus could have played it safe, avoided trouble, and tried to look good in the eyes of the powerful rulers and those who wanted to hurt Him. But the truth of the Gospel cannot be compromised—it must be told, no matter the cost.

I read a story this week about a very special automobile. It was built in the 1920s by the Italian manufacturer Bugatti, designed for the outrageously wealthy. This car was equipped with 450 horsepower under the hood, it was about 22 feet long, and it weighed around 6,000 pounds. Hand-crafted from the finest materials, it handled like a dream and cost around \$400,000—an astronomical price even in the 1920s.

Naturally, it wasn't a car for just anyone, and only a few were made. The story mentioned that only six of these cars are known to still exist, and the only one in the United States is owned by a retired general. He keeps it locked away in a secure garage, polished and shiny, pristine and perfect, with no spot or blemish.

Here's what is even more striking: this car is about 70 years old. It is a magnificent driving machine that could take you virtually anywhere in complete comfort. Yet, in all those years, it has only been driven 3,200 miles. Just 3,200 miles in seven decades of service.

This Bugatti is essentially a museum piece. It's something to be admired, but that's all it is—just something to look at. It has all this power, all this potential, but nobody is using it. It has all this "get-up-and-go," yet no one is putting it to work. It's only good for display, and nothing more.

Looking good is really no problem at all. There's no issue with looking good, if that's all you want. Just stay out of trouble, avoid harm, don't go where you shouldn't, and don't say what you shouldn't. Just hold onto your privacy, and you'll appear unspotted and unblemished.

But will you go anywhere? Will you do anything? Will you make a difference in anyone's life? Somehow, it is said that God has more in mind for us than just goodness. God wants to move us to speak the truth of the Gospel, regardless of the consequences, especially when it comes to defending the most vulnerable, the less fortunate, and the little ones in God's Kingdom.

So, let's not be nothing. Let's love God and our neighbours so that we can be someone. Let's speak the truth of the Gospel, so that we can be disciples of Christ and messengers of His Word. **Amen.**