

RENEW LENT - FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

MARCH 10, 2024

God's Pursuing Love

By Marrick Reeve

When my now husband first asked me out on a date, we had been good friends for about a year and had known of each other for over six years. He planned it in a typical first-date fashion, and I just showed up. I, however, do not like surprises. I tried so hard not to ask where we were going or what we were doing and just appreciate the time spent together, getting to know each other in a different way. Long story short, he served me potato salad on our picnic (I only like potatoes if they're fried) and then took me to the boardgame café (I do NOT enjoy boardgames.) Although my mouth is decent at keeping my thoughts in, my face is not. He read right through my attempt at excitement and an easy-going attitude. Praise be to Jesus that he did not allow our first date to be our only date, and he continued to pursue me.

In the first reading, we see the Lord persistently pursue His people. At first glance, this reading seems harsh: opposing kings, battles, fire, destruction, and exile; however, it is quick to speak of the Lord's plan. He sent the prophet Jeremiah to speak His word, and His word was not heeded. He allowed death and destruction so His people might return to Him and have a relationship with Him.

The Lord pursued a relationship with the people of Israel time and time again through falter and blatant rejection, and He continues to pursue each and every one of our hearts too. "God, who is rich in mercy, out of great love with which he loved us... made us alive together with Christ" (Eph 2.4). It is not by anything we have or will do that God the Father loves us. It is a free gift, which we must decide whether to accept or not.

The love of Jesus is a spousal love. Jesus, Bridegroom of the Church, loves us freely, fruitfully, faithfully, and forever. He made a promise to love us in such a way when He offered his whole body for us, for our sins and our failings on the cross, so that we might have a relationship with Him. The Lord keeps His promises. He offers Himself fully.

He continues to call us deeper into relationship with Him. He wants us to get to know Him, be with Him, spend time with Him, and not be ashamed of our relationship with Him. He will persist in showing Himself to us, chasing after our hearts, and calling us by name. He doesn't speak in a booming voice from the sky but rather as little nudges on our hearts.



Every time I see a rainbow, I hear the Lord say to me, "Hey, this is a little gift for you! I know that you love them! Here is a reminder that I love you." In a similar way, my husband will put a new coffee pod in the machine for me before he leaves for work because he knows brewing a cup of coffee will be the first thing I do when I get up. Every dish washed, meal made, crumb swept off the floor, and hour worked with a tough coworker to provide for our family is an "I love you." The Lord also speaks in "I love you's"; we need only to open our hearts to feel the nudge.

For Your Reflection:

- How does God whisper "I love you" throughout your day?
- We are midway through Lent: are your Lenten actions bringing you deeper into relationship with the Lord?
- A relationship takes effort. It requires growth and knowledge of the other. We can be doing good things that the Lord might not be asking of us in this season of life. How is the Lord asking you to love Him?
- Married couples wear rings as sacramentals (a physical reminder of the invisible grace of the sacrament) as a reminder of their commitment. Do you wear a reminder of your commitment to love and serve God? If not, I encourage you to start!

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal dashed lines.

*Lord, thank you for your persistent
pursuit of my heart. Help me to recognize
Your love in the unexpected moments of
life, and grant me the courage to respond
with openness and gratitude.
Amen*