

Homily for the 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

You probably have heard the phrase before “laugh out loud” – abbreviated LOL when texting or on social media. It basically means what it says – you find something so funny, you just laugh out loud. I’m sure you’ve heard of “think out loud” before. You know, that’s when you’re trying to figure something out, so you talk to yourself out loud, hoping to figure it out! But, what about “love out loud”? I might have just made that one up. But, I think it totally fits with our Scripture readings this weekend. What do I mean?

Well, take the prophet Elisha in our first reading. He would visit this married couple from time to time and have dinner with them. They were so happy to have this man of God visit with them, so they prepared a little room in their house for him. And he, in turn, was so thankful for their hospitality that he prophesied that she, who had no son, would be pregnant with a male child in a year’s time – something that truly came to pass.

Or, take our Gospel today, where Jesus declares: “Whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink because the little one is a disciple – amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward.”

So, how does this relate to “loving out loud”? Well, I think these two illustrations show us what it means to be a real follower of God – to repay the kindness shown to you with even more kindness; to go out of your way to give someone who’s thirsty something to drink. To be an intentional disciple of Jesus means that we intentionally seek to love others – that we put others first, on purpose – on purpose! Again, look at the example of Jesus Himself. As Scripture tells us, “God is love”. Therefore, God’s Son, humbles Himself to be born of the Virgin Mary, only to be murdered on a cross so that our sins would be forgiven. Jesus goes to great lengths to demonstrate – to show us – His Father’s total, unconditional love, which gives everything for us! Love cost Jesus. It cost Him His life.

But what about us? As St. Paul teaches in our second reading today: “We were indeed buried with Christ through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.” In other words, beginning in baptism, we have become members of Christ’s very Body. Therefore, in Him, we have died to the old life of slavery to sin and have been freed from the kingdom of darkness, coming to new life in Christ as God’s adopted sons and daughters. It’s that “newness of life” that we are empowered by God to live now! In other words, that same power that raised Jesus from the dead is living inside of us, and enables us to live as Jesus did – in a word, to “love out loud”.

To love out loud is to not think of me, me, me; but to think of others, and to put their needs first. To love out loud is to intentionally look for ways to help others; not waiting to be asked first, and do it begrudgingly later. To love out loud is to take someone's shopping cart back to the store, even if it means making a separate trip!

I call this loving out loud, because sometimes we have the wrong idea about love. We think that loving means having a good feeling about someone or not treating them rudely or unkindly. But for love to really be love, it must go outside of ourselves. And it must lead to positive, affirming action. Love is not simply a word said or an emotion felt, but it's a choice to put others first, especially when it's inconvenient; especially when we'd rather not; especially when it's their choice, not ours.

To close, I think St. Teresa of Calcutta – Mother Teresa – put it so well when she wrote: “We must not think that our love has to be extraordinary. But we do need to love without getting tired. How does a lamp burn? Through the continuous input of small drops of oil. These drops are the small things of daily life: faithfulness, small words of kindness, a thought for others, our way of being quiet, of looking, of speaking, and of acting. They are the true drops of love that keep our lives and relationships burning like a living flame.”

Intentionally loving others, that is, loving out loud is why we're here. It's what God wants to teach us as we go throughout our days, and it's how He wants us to live each of them. God bless you.