

Homily

Sunday 5 Easter

29 April 2018

*Only by love can we be certain that we are children of the truth.*

What exactly is this thing we call love? Certainly not *just words or mere talk*, something to do with relationships and something to do with keeping God's commandments, and in some strange sense, something that is even greater than our conscience.

Sometimes love requires us to make big changes in our lives. In our first reading, St Paul has just had his Damascus road experience, his complete conversion from a very strict pharasaical Judaism to faith in the crucified and risen Jesus. Like many new converts he can be inclined to be a bit extreme. Luckily, he has Barnabas to look after him, but he still ends up in arguments with some of the people.

But if love sometimes requires us to make big changes, to launch out in new directions, to travel to the very extremities of human experience, then at other times love requires us to stay still, to stay firmly rooted in our tradition and our community, to remain resolute in the face of suffering and tragedy. *"I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty."* We can expect to be pruned. We can expect to be challenged. We can expect to be cut to the very quick. But love will sustain us. Love will keep us faithful. Love will enable us to remain true to who we really are.

So, love is two things at once – a going out to the extremities and a resting deep within the stillness of God, and passion for justice and political change, and a desire for prayerfulness and contemplation. Yes, love is two things at once because God is two things at once – the Creator of the whole universe, the source of all that is, and the one who comes among us, suffers and dies for us and rises again.

The great affirmation of our faith is that the words 'God' and 'Love' are ultimately interchangeable. To live in love is to live in God, and to live in God is to live in love.

Fr Michael