

OCTOBER 24 2024 FATHER RYAN NIGLI

To live the Christian life well, we need to be, as Saint Paul says, "rooted and grounded in love, the love of Christ," as we continue on our journey home—our journey, God willing, to Heaven. We need the love of Christ to enable us to keep going and to empower us to bring others closer to God as well.

To be "rooted and grounded in love" means that as we go through life, we will be able to withstand all the sufferings and trials that come our way. The love of Christ is not meant to be viewed as simply a feeling, like when we think, "I know I'm loved by Christ when I feel good." What happens when we don't feel good? We may begin to doubt that God still loves us. Certainly, the love of God can be felt and can be an amazing consolation, but we must go deeper than feelings. We must know the love of Christ in the depths of our souls, so that no matter what is happening on the surface of our lives, we do not doubt. We must never doubt that we are truly beloved sons and daughters of the Father.

So, how are we doing today? Perhaps we need to be reminded of the great love God has for us. In our first reading, Saint Paul encourages the Ephesians in this way, writing a beautiful and heartfelt prayer that they may come to fully know this love. Let his words speak to each of us today. He says, "I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

We are invited to spend time in prayer today, asking for the grace to experience anew this great love in our own lives. In fact, this is not something that should only be done today—it must become a daily habit. Just as a car runs out of gas or electricity and needs to be refilled or recharged, we too, as we navigate the challenges of life, will feel as though we are running on empty if we do not constantly go back to God, daily receiving His love in prayer. Especially in silent prayer, where we listen to God and sit at His feet to receive the love He wishes to give us.

Notice how Saint Paul desires that we come to know this love "with all the saints." He alludes to the fact that the saints knew this love, and we, who are also called to be saints, must know it as well. But knowing is not enough. Saint Paul shows us in his life, through his own experience, how Christ's love completely transformed him—from being a persecutor of the Church to becoming its greatest missionary. The love of Christ was not something Paul kept for himself; he was inspired to share it with as many people as he possibly could.

We must follow his example. The love of Christ, when experienced in the depths of our hearts, cannot and should not leave us unchanged. This is why Jesus says in the gospel that He has come to bring fire to the earth. He has come to set us ablaze with His love, to inspire us to live with God and for God, to live as God desires, to be fully alive, realizing our potential, living our vocation well, and bringing those around us closer to God.

We must live with holy boldness, not allowing others to extinguish this flame. Jesus speaks in the gospel of bringing division, but this does not

mean He seeks to break up families. Rather, the fire of God's love should change who we are, how we act, and how we behave. It should be contagious and spread to others. While not everyone around us may be willing to accept this same love, we must always be willing to put God first, prioritizing Him above all else in our lives.

We pray that God's love within us will spread to others—to our family members, friends, co-workers, those who do not know Christ, and those who have fallen away from the Church. As we receive God's love and are filled and transformed by it, may that love impact all those around us. May they be inspired by our Christ-like words and actions, and may they especially receive graces from the prayers we offer for them.

In this Mass, let us ask for a greater outpouring of Christ's love in us, so that we can continue to strive forward toward Heaven and lead others closer to God as well.