

ARCHDIOCESE OF

TOGETHER IN MISSION

LOS ANGELES

Homiletic Reflection for
Announcement Sunday
3 February 2019

Central Idea: Our faith, our Church gives us opportunities to enter into and foster a relationship with God who is love itself. As missionary disciples we are sent out into the world to be instruments of God's loving presence.

As much of the American public gathers to watch the Superbowl, stores all around us are putting the word "love" and hearts on just about every imaginable thing. And while it is fitting that we have times to recognize those we love and be recognized by them, our readings today show us that we are called to something much deeper, to live in a more fulfilling way.

St. Paul takes the Corinthians to task for paying more attention to what makes them different from each other rather than what unites them. The spiritual gifts that members of the community had received became a cause of division instead of humility and service. Focusing on these external expressions, they failed to grasp that whatever gift they had been given has the same source: God. What followed this division was a sort of competition or feuding to see who was "better" by way of their gifts. St. Paul's words cut right through it and show that the most important thing of all is the love that is the foundation of all the spiritual gifts. Now the Greeks had four different words that we translate into English as "love." The only one that Paul uses in this passage is *agape*, a self-sacrificing, self-giving love. This love beckons us to see beyond our own needs and answer God's call to give of ourselves. How do we describe or define love? How do we know it when we see it? How we answer this question can depend a lot on how we learned about what love is. Many of us learned about love in the context of our family and friends. We have also been taught about love through our Catholic faith, through its many practices and prayers as well as the writing of the saints. Sometimes we take this for granted and we don't always recognize the impact this teaching has on our lives.

Jeremiah, from the first reading today, is a good example. We have heard of his calling by God many times. Often, we focus on how God calls him, a youth, to be his prophet. How did Jeremiah know and understand what God was calling him to do? He grew up being taught about the ways of God interacting throughout human history. He heard the stories of God liberating his people from Egypt and guiding his people to the promised land. Although young, his life had been filled with a teaching that gave him an awareness of God's presence and action in the world. How many of us have heard of our young people today anxiously searching for meaning and purpose in life? Wondering if God even exists? In the most difficult times of life, where do they turn?

This resistance or hesitance in acknowledging God we hear in our Gospel reading as well. The people of Jesus' home town couldn't believe what they were hearing about his miracles or his wisdom in teaching. We hear these same sentiments many times in our world today. There are many who doubt the teachings of the Church and even still many who doubt the existence of God. How do we respond to these challenges in our world today?

By our baptism, we have all been called to be disciples, to follow Christ's example in how

we live and act with others. How can we live the teaching Paul gives us today about love, this self-giving and selfless love? Every day that we choose to live by faith, every moment that we decide to respond out of love to others, we are living witnesses to the presence and action of Christ. The world needs witnesses: people who can show that God's love is real, and that faith gives us the strength and courage to meet life's ups and downs with hope in God's promises.

We have an opportunity to be witnesses to God's love to other parish communities, to brothers and sisters who seek God's comfort and guidance, his courage and his blessing. We have a chance to help other communities to continue to be nourished by Word and Sacrament. To reach out to the poor and the broken-hearted. To help people, young and old, to grow in faith and practice a Christ-like love. Next weekend we will be making our pledges for Together in Mission. By helping in this annual appeal, we can help other communities be able to form disciples who will be God's witnesses in the world today.

God calls us to be his witnesses in the world today. By imitating Jesus' selfless love, which is gentle, kind and doesn't seek its own interests, we have the capacity to show how a life of faith can transform even the most difficult situation into a moment of grace. Through our assistance with Together in Mission, we can help other communities hand on that faith and strengthen it with our brothers and sisters. God's love never fails. May we not fail in being faithful witnesses to that love.