

## FOURTH SUNDAY OT - C

"Love is patient, love is kind ... it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury."

I highlight these lines from St. Paul's beautiful hymn on love because of the situations we are presented with in the First Reading and the Gospel.

God calls Jeremiah to be a prophet, a prophet who will face great opposition, so much so that at one point in his career he is threatened with death by being thrown down into a well!

In the Gospel, Jesus is claiming to be the fulfillment of the Scripture passage we heard him read last Sunday.

Although some people speak highly of him, others consider Jesus to be arrogant; after all, they had known him since he was a child, the son of a carpenter.

Jeremiah's is told that his mission to the Jewish people will be a difficult one, and yet he accepts it.

The anger of the people of Nazareth who want to throw Jesus off of a cliff only foreshadows the ultimate rejection he will face which will lead to his passion and death.

And yet, Jesus continues his ministry and will do so with the upmost compassion even as he preaches a challenging message especially to the religious leaders of his day.

Both Jeremiah and Jesus live out those beautiful words of St. Paul:

"Love is patient, love is kind ... it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury."

These words are often read at weddings.

I tell the bride and groom that patience and forgiveness are the secret of a happy marriage.

I'm sure that any married couple would say the same.

This message holds true in any friendship and, indeed, in any relationship in the workplace or the neighborhood.

It is supposed to be the particular hallmark of being a Christian: patience and forgiveness.

St. Paul's poetic hymn about love enumerates the various virtues necessary to practice patience and forgiveness:

- Not being rude or pompous
- Not seeking one's own interests
- Not being quick tempered
- Not enjoying seeing others fail

The patience and forgiveness which are the very soul of love "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

And Paul assures us that this kind of love never fails.

We need that assurance if we are to truly accept our vocation to bring Christ's love to all those we meet.

Yes, this vocation to love will involve suffering but we trust that Jesus has walked this path before us and has shown to us the victory love will win.

Perhaps as we prepare to enter the month of February - punctuated as it is in the middle by Valentine's Day - we should remember and give thanks for all those people who have been models of selfless, sacrificial love for us.

Let us recall with gratitude those who have been great examples of patience and forgiveness.

Those who have borne all things, believed all things, kept hope alive in all the midst of the multitude of various challenges, enduring all things so often for the sake of others.