

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Jan 26th 2015

Not many of us routinely correspond via a hand written letter. A hand written love-letter is very special and intimate. Something to be saved and savored.

Recently I had the occasion to re-read the love-letters between a newly engaged young couple written in 1910. After their engagement she remained with her parents in Istanbul, Turkey while he was sent to Cairo, Egypt on duty. His letters overflow with passionate longing and desire for his “childlike” beloved. He misses her terribly; enthusiastically looking forward to their being together and to their wedding. In strong clear penmanship he praises her beauty and talents, commends her intellect, and encourages her athleticism. Apparently she is a vision of unassuming loveliness as she takes to the tennis court, trouncing most opponents all the while balancing a wide brimmed sun bonnet and navigating effortlessly in an ankle length white flowing skirt.

Her letters penned in a delicate graceful hand are more hesitant. Her message is of a genteel nature, yet full of loving commitment and yearning. Hers carry family, social and political news of the week. Both sprinkle their letters with terms of endearment, fond memories, and anticipated joy. Each one sends encouragement to keep safe, to enjoy friends and activities and to continue in their committed love with the “blessing of the Good Lord.” Love blossomed. They were married in 1911, raised a family of four children and lived together lovingly, respectfully and charitably until her death in 1963. It was only after his death in 1981 that we family discovered their letters.

Paul’s letter to Timothy is just such a letter – not between an engaged couple, but between two very dear friends who have journeyed together. They are devoted to each other and committed to Jesus. Paul refers to Timothy as “my dear child” blessing him with the “grace, mercy and peace from God...and Jesus...” He likewise recalls common events and shared attitudes: “I am grateful to God...I remember you constantly in my prayers...I yearn to see you...that I may be filled with joy...” “I recall your sincere faith...I am confident that (faith) lives in you.” Paul goes on to encourage Timothy “to stir into flame the gift of God that you have...of power and love.”

The young couple’s love letters have filled the hearts of their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. As I read, I delight in my grandparents’ love expressed over 100 years ago. Generations of our family are loved, blessed by their love. We are made whole, became and continue to become family through their love.

Paul’s letter written from a Roman prison cell almost 2,000 years ago has traveled far beyond

Timothy, Bishop of Ephesus, Turkey. Paul's personal letter of sincere love and encouragement to teach and model Jesus' "justice, faith, charity,...peace... and mercy" reaches us today. We read these same words in the hand written letters and hear them in the gentle, strong words spoken by our own Pope Frances.

Jesus spoke these same words, commanding/inviting me to love, to make peace, to bestow justice, and above all to show mercy. I hear it in the scriptures, in our earliest faith family's love-letters and still today in the loving letters from my dear friend Frances.

This is the Good-News: We are family, faith community, united and strong in the love that is handed down and still lives today. I have you and you have me and we have each other and our dear Frances to keep encouraging our family.

Amen

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