
A MESSAGE TO LOVERS



At the dawn of the New Millennium I suggested that pastors dedicate at least three Sundays of Lent, 2000, to reflecting on the greatness of human love and the beauty of the Christian couple. I am assured certain that for couples, the love of the Lord is from age to age.

TWIST AND SPIRAL

How often Nana Mouskouri's [French] song "*Roule, s'enroule*" has echoed in my heart: "*Today I love you for two, today, my heart beats for two, I find you and I instantly discover the end of the world. Twist and spiral my life around yours, twist and spiral your fate around mine; flow, overflow with tenderness that there is no end to my belief in you. This day is made for us two; one moment I close my eyes; you hum better than anyone the song I so love to hear. The sun sets and goes out and the wind suddenly dies down; it stills itself perhaps for you to better hear the gentle song.*"

A WORLD OF POETRY

Better than any, poets are the ones who help us plumb the depths of human love. And what lover is there who is not a poet?... If there are gestures and words which can escape from one who is not a lover, it seems to me that one of the basic attitudes of people in love is a sense of the marvellous. And I am not surprised to realise that God himself marvelled at the man and woman He had just created: "*So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them... God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good*" (Gn. 1:27, 31). And the author of the *Song of Songs* also waxes eloquent: "*For love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it*" (Song 8:6-7a).

IT IS LOVE

If we were to appraise the contents of songs and hymns which speak of human love, our libraries and record collections would not be enough to hold them all. The human heart cherishes words which seem to be immortal. Singer Édith Piaf set many hearts beating and tears flowing with words like "*It is love which makes us love, it is love which makes us dream, it is love which makes us love one another, love also which makes us cry. But all those who believe they love one another, who make believe they cry, or all those who believe they love one another, will never be able to cry. In love there must be tears, in love one must give. And those who have no tears will never be able to love. To have the right to love one must have shed a torrent of tears. My love, you whom I love, you often make me cry; I have given, given my tears, I have paid with my tears the price of loving you always.*" Challenging words, here, telling us of the depth and the requirements of love; but can one talk of the right to love and be loved? "*If one offered for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly scorned,*" says the *Song of Songs* (Song 8:7b).

A SURPRISING TEXT

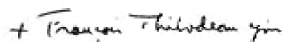
If you have the time, I would suggest that you look at what Vatican Council II has to say regarding the dignity of the human person and the nobility of human love and marriage. You will find in the document *The Church in the Modern World* truly surprising texts: *"The intimate partnership of life and the love which constitutes the married state has been established by the creator and endowed by him with its own proper laws; it is rooted in the contract of its partners, that is, in their irrevocable personal consent. It is an institution confirmed by divine law and receiving its stability, in the eyes of society also, from the human act by which the partners mutually surrender themselves to each other; for the good of the partners, of the children, and of society this sacred bond no longer depends on human decision alone. For God himself is the author of marriage and has endowed it with various values and purposes; all of these have a very important bearing on the continuation of the human race, on the personal development and eternal destiny of every member of the family, on the duty of the family and the whole human race."* [Gaudium et Spes, 48.]

LIVING IN LOVE

We have often sung *"Living in love, every day, always loving one another; from the moment we love one another, that life is lived eternally on this earth without borders. But to achieve this will take time, talking to one another, knowing one another better than before, because the earth without borders is no children's game."* Growing in a life of love does not happen without discipline. Love has its own rites and rhythms. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's Little Prince learned this the hard way, that it takes time to let oneself be tamed and to tame in return. That is why the time spent going out together is important. Far from being routine and boring, it is meant to be a period of discovery and wonder. And I would add that if the sense of wonder has already worn off after going out a few months, this is a significant signal in the life of the couple-to-be.

LIVING WITH THE HEART

As for me, I am convinced that our whole being is a gift of God's grace, and I hope that our whole existence is consecrated to him. Our story is a life compact: may each day reveal the presence of this loving God: Living with one's whole heart the mission of Jesus in the midst of the world. We shall return to this next week.



+ François Thibodeau
Bishop of Edmundston

« From A Bishop's Journal » (314) (19 January 2000)