

Letter from the Priest at Crowland Abbey

Dear Friends

LOVE

During the month of February we have Valentine's Day – a time of year when all our thoughts turn to love, and we can't fail to notice rack upon rack of Valentine's cards and gifts in the shops.

When I preach at weddings I often ask the question "What is love?", quickly following that with my own definition of what I believe Christian love is. Christians believe that the word love is a "doing" word, because we can't love without action. The only way to demonstrate our love for someone is by doing things for that person, and by making sacrifices for them and, if we love truly and unconditionally we will inevitably be called to make sacrifices.

God provided the ultimate example of this as he sacrificed his only Son for us, knowing that the world would reject him and ultimately crucify him. God did this purely out of love for us. In the same way, if we truly love God in return, then that love for him will inevitably call us to make sacrifices in our lives for him. We are all very individual people, wonderfully and amazingly different, and the personal sacrifices we are called to make in our love for God will vary vastly from one person to another. God loves us all, and knows us all, and calls us all in very different ways.

St Paul wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians Chapter 13: "Love is patient, love is kind. It doesn't envy, it doesn't boast, it isn't proud. It isn't rude, it isn't self-seeking, it isn't easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love doesn't delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres".

Paul didn't write those words out of sentimental idealism. For Paul it was practical, real and true. Above everything that life had thrown at him - trials and tribulations, illness, imprisonment, shipwreck, and more - he had encountered this kind of love for himself in his relationship with Jesus.

I pray that we will all be able to experience that same kind of loving relationship which Paul found in Jesus, and that we will all know and understand – and willingly make - the sacrifices that we are called to make in the name of love, both for God and for others.

Yours in Christ

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