

LOVE AND THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN CHANGE A PERSON'S ATTITUDES.

The best way to encourage a person to repent from wrongdoing or to encourage one to be doing what we consider right is by loving the person as Jesus Christ loves us and through the help of the Holy Spirit. A punishment that is devoid of love hardly changes the hearts of those who commit grievous crimes, but love and Holy Spirit can do that. This punishment can only make an offender, or a lawbreaker quit committing crimes for some time or make the person cautious in committing crimes so as not to be caught. TO WIN OUR HEARTS, GOD SHOWS US LOTS OF LOVE AND GIFTED US WITH HIS SPIRIT. Some weeks ago, we heard stories about how Jesus' Apostles abandoned or denied Him when He was arrested. The Apostles lost their hope and interest in Jesus after His crucifixion and death. Initially, these Apostles thought that Jesus was a political messiah who would liberate them from the colonial rule of the Romans, but Jesus' death shattered their hopes. In the last weekend's Gospel reading (John 20:19-31), Jesus, after resurrecting, came back to the Apostles for the second time, not to judge them for denying Him or abandoning Him but to show them His undying love. He bestowed them with the gift of the Holy Spirit and the power to forgive sins. In today's Gospel reading (John 21:1-19), Jesus visited His Apostles for the third time after His resurrection, helped them catch lots of fish, and gave them breakfast. After the breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter three times if he loved Him. Jesus showed them, love, before asking Peter if he loved Him back. LOVE IS SUPPOSED TO BE MUTUAL OR RECIPROCATED. When Peter told Jesus that he loved Him, Jesus told him to feed His sheep....to feed His lambs... to tend His sheep. Jesus' demand from Peter is to care for His Church or feed His followers with the Gospel message and the Eucharist. It equally means to feed His followers with His mercy, love, forgiveness, compassion, and so on. At this point, Jesus handed over to the Church, through Peter the head of the Apostles, the mission of caring for our souls. In the first reading (Acts 5:27-41) the Sanhedrin, the Jewish leading council, that plotted the killing of Jesus to stop his teachings questioned Peter and other Apostles why they continued disseminating Jesus' teachings or preaching in Jesus' name after giving them orders to stop it, but Peter and other Apostles, without fear, made it clear to them that they would only obey God rather than human beings. They continued to spread Jesus' teachings when they left the presence of the Jewish leading council and were even happy that they suffered for doing God's will. Remember that these Apostles were afraid when Jesus was arrested and hid for the fear of the Jews. THE LOVE WHICH JESUS SHOWED THEM AND THE HOLY SPIRIT WHICH THEY RECEIVED DISPELLED FEAR IN THEM AND EMPOWERED THEM TO PREACH ABOUT JESUS. Peter who rebuked Jesus for telling them that He would suffer and die in the hands of human beings, in today's first reading, is rejoicing that he has shared in the suffering of Christ. JESUS CHANGED HIM BY LOVING HIM UNCONDITIONALLY AND BY EMPOWERING HIM WITH HIS SPIRIT. Most of our priests, deacons or lay ministers experienced God's love or mercy in their lives, and in reciprocating that love or mercy accepted their vocation or mission. **Doing God's will is not easy, it involves suffering, criticisms, rejection, misunderstanding, and so on.** The Apostles experienced suffering, criticisms, and rejections in their ministries, but they continued with their work. God has shown us enough love by keeping us alive, through the forgiveness of our sins, blessing us with both material and spiritual gifts. God gifted us with His Spirit when we received the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. **What prevents us from sharing our faith without fear as the Apostles did through our words and actions?** EACH OF US HAS RECEIVED GOD'S MERCY OR FORGIVENESS. It is pertinent for us

to know that when God gives us anything, He wants us to share it with others. When God forgives you, He wants you to forgive others. When God is merciful to you, He wants you to be merciful to others too. When God is kind to you, He wants you to be kind to others. THE BEST WAY TO GOSSIP IS TO GOSSIP ABOUT JESUS. Let us talk about Jesus' unconditional love on our social media; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and so on. YOUR LOVELY MESSAGE ON THE SOCIAL MEDIA CAN ENCOURAGE A PERSON TO KEEP DOING GOOD OR MAKE A PERSON THINK ABOUT QUITTING HIS OR HER LIFESTYLE THAT HE OR SHE IS NOT PROUD OF. You may not have the opportunity I have as a priest to talk about Jesus in front of a congregation, but you have a reading or listening audience on social media. Jesus promised that whoever acknowledges or talks about Him before others that He will acknowledge or talk about the person before our Heavenly Father in Heaven (Matthew 10:32). MAY GOD HELP US TO SHARE OUR FAITH IN LOVE WITH OTHERS, AMEN.