

### 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY IN OT—Year B—M01-D21-Y2021

01. *“Brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, and those who mourn, as though they were not mourning...for the present form of this world is passing away.”*
02. With these perplexing words from the second reading—Paul tries to prepare the early Church for the Second Coming of Christ—**by urging his followers not to cling to those things which are passing—to set their focus on eternal things—upon the things that truly matter, and the things that truly last.**
03. Believe it, or not, **these words from Paul make me think of another great spiritual writer—one who I wouldn’t NECESSARILY put on the same level as Paul—but one who I consider one of the more inspired and gifted poets of our time. That person is Bono from my favourite rock group U2—NOT YOUTUBE, but U2.**
04. A few years ago, **U2 came out with a beautiful and haunting song that truly captures some of what Paul is getting at in the second reading—the song is called: LOVE IS ALL WE HAVE LEFT.**
05. I would now like to quote some of the words from this song: *I wanted the world, but you knew better, and that all we have is immortality...(and that) love, is all we have left...the only thing that can be kept...You argue because you can’t accept...(that) Love, and love, is all we have left.*
06. The reason these words from the song really speak to me about the message in today’s readings is because **both Paul and Jesus were trying to WAKE UP the people of their time to what truly matters in life — to urge them to stop focusing on things that don’t last—and to put their focus on things that truly matter.**
07. And in an unfortunate way, **maybe this is part of the reason God is allowing this pandemic to happen—to wake us up to what truly matters.** Because, just like many people of OUR TIME—the people

of PAUL'S AND JESUS' TIME, wanted the world—buying into the illusion that **all we could possibly need, and that all we could possibly want, is right here on this planet.**

08. BUT both Jesus and Paul knew better—that **all we have is immortality—and that, in the end, love is ALL WE'LL HAVE LEFT.**
09. Because love is the **only thing good and pure enough to last forever—the only thing powerful and real enough to carry us into eternity** — everything else: **pleasure, power, possessions, security, control—all these things that the world has to offer are simply illusions—illusions which steal a lot of our time, our energy, and our focus** — but in the end, **they won't matter, and in the end, they don't last—for as Paul said: the things of this world are PASSING AWAY.**
10. And so, **it's an illusion that we can possess anything in this life BUT LOVE**—that we truly have anything but love and immortality — **and that we can take anything into eternity but the love that has filled our lives.** And this is not just some kind of cheesy hallmark sentiment — this is **a profound truth that many accept much too late in life.**
11. There's another line from the song that truly speaks to the message of today's readings—and it goes like this: ***This is no time NOT to be alive.***
12. I find these words INSIGHTFUL—because what Paul and Jesus were trying to tell the early Christians is that **these passing things, these illusions in which we invest so much time and energy—ACTUALLY steal our life, and make us dead inside.** And that love is the only thing that truly makes us alive—**the only thing that truly makes us live life to the fullest.**
13. And this is what repentance is **really all about**—and why Jesus **so stressed it during His Public Ministry.** Because when Our Lord says: *"...the time is fulfilled...repent, and believe in the Good News"*, He's

saying—*this is no time NOT to be alive*—no time to invest our energies into things that **ONLY** steal our life.

14. Because contrary to popular opinion, **true religion is not about making life more dull and burdensome** — true religion is about **REALLY LIVING LIFE**—by investing our time and energy in the only thing that really matters in life—the only thing that will take us into eternity—which is love.
15. For this reason, God doesn't call us to repentance to make life more **dreary and miserable** — God calls us to repentance in order for us to **live life to the fullest**—so that we are not simply existing and passing time with worldly pursuits and pleasure—but that we are **TRULY living life**—embracing the best that life has to offer — and **there's nothing greater that life has to offer than the opportunity to love and to be loved.**
16. And so, repentance is simply calling us **AWAY from the things that are NOT love**—to **live life as if love is all that we have left**—because in the end, that's all we'll be left with—love and immortality.  
**PAUSE**
17. I always used to find it really interesting, and a little curious, that Paul uses this phrase: **let those who mourn be as though they are NOT mourning.** Because there are many in our society, many in our community **who ARE mourning—and who have to go on living life as though they are NOT mourning** — many who have to put on a brave face even though they are truly hurting and bleeding inside.
18. For even though grief is as profound as any physical pain we can experience—as **shocking and disorienting as losing a limb—as painful as having one's heart ripped from one's body** — there are many who have to live as if none of this has happened to them. **Many who have had to face the difficult truth that love is not all they have left—but pain as well.**
19. Because, unfortunately, there is no way to separate love and pain—even for God. And **even God Himself was not spared pain because**

of love. For just as **we can't have freedom without the possibility of evil** — so too **we can't have love without the possibility of pain**. And, unfortunately, the more intense the love, the more intense the pain as well.

20. But God in His infinite Wisdom thought that **the love was worth the pain—because, in the end, the pain will be no more—and the love we share with others will be all that's left**.
21. And NOT to disrespect Paul's inspired words in any way—but I think another useful way of understanding what he was saying is: ***let those who are NOT MOURNING live as though they ARE MOURNING*** — not in a morbid sense, but in a **COURAGEOUS** sense—the sense by which those who **ARE** mourning live their lives day after day — facing life, and in some cases embracing life, even though their hearts are **COMPLETELY BROKEN** — **not having any illusions about what this world, and the comforts of this world, have to offer** — continuing to open their hearts to love even though love has brought them so much pain.
22. And so, **those who mourn can really teach us and inspire us**—for even though, in some cases, all they have left is the love they bear for those they have lost—**that love is powerful enough to sustain them. PAUSE**
23. A couple of years ago I had the opportunity to **FINALLY** see a movie that really drove this truth home for me—a movie that many people have been telling me for years to see — a movie that I'm sure all of you have heard of — and that movie is: **THE NOTEBOOK**.
24. In the beginning of the film, one of the characters says something quite profound. He says: ***I am no one special...there are no monuments dedicated to me, and my name will soon be forgotten; but in one respect I have succeeded as gloriously as anyone who has ever lived; because I have loved another with all my heart and soul—and for me, that has always been enough.***

25. But this love for another not only made him **truly successful in the only way that really matters in life**—this love for another was powerful enough to sustain him even in extremely dark times—**even when, in a sense, he was mourning the loss of his beloved—and when all he had left was his love for her. PAUSE**
26. And so, on this, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in ordinary time, Our Lord invites us to reflect on those things in which we invest much of our time and energy — **to ask ourselves whether these things are truly worth our investment**—whether they are making us live to the fullest—or whether they are simply stealing our life away — for, even though we are in the midst of deadly pandemic, **TRULY this no time NOT to be alive.**
27. Because it's one of the great deceptions of our time that **living life to the fullest means living a life filled with worldly pleasure, success, and comforts—living a life free from challenges and hardships.** But living life to the fullest is just as the character in *The Notebook* described: **to love with ALL one's heart and soul.**
28. For this reason, Our Lord **ALSO** invites us today **NOT** to spend too much time and energy investing in things **that don't last, and that won't matter in the end** — to live life as if **we ARE mourning—with our eyes set on eternity—with no illusions about the comforts this world has to offer — and to recognize that LOVE IS THE BEST INVESTMENT,** because in the end, love is all we'll have left.
29. And even though love will sometimes bring pain—**pain cannot destroy love, it can only make love stronger — and in the end, love will completely SWALLOW the pain**—so that the pain will be no more—and only the love will remain.
30. Because, even in the face of **profound grief,** even in the midst of deadly pandemic—**love is powerful enough to sustain us and give us COMPLETE victory over our suffering**—because as Paul himself once said: **Love bears ALL things—believes ALL things—hopes ALL things—and endures ALL things. And love never ends. AMEN.**