6 B

MDP of God

I want to wish all of you a very happy **Saint** Valentine’s Day

In our day and age a lot of people forget the Saint part

While there are many legends about St Valentine---almost all agree that he was a priest and he got in trouble for performing the marriages of Christian couples

Some legends narrow it down to the speculation that he performed the marriages of Roman soldiers who were not supposed to married

It’s commonly believed that he was martyred on February 14th in the year 269—although there’s a lot of debate about the year---speculation goes anywhere from 269-280

And the legends say that he healed the blind daughter of his jailer—and that led to the conversion of 44 of the jailer’s relatives—*so he was a great evangelist*

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And while there is a lot of debate about the various aspects of St Valentine’s life—there’s little doubt that he was a priest and that his feast day is very much associated with love

And since love is at the very center of our Catholic Christian faith---I think we do well today to reflect on how well we are personally living the two great commandments that Jesus emphasized:

The 1st commandment is to love God with all our hearts, all our souls, all our mind, and all our strength

And the 2nd is to love our neighbor as ourselves

St Paul in our 2nd reading today *speaks of trying to please everyone in every way* **not seeking his own benefit**—*but the benefit of the many*

And that too gets at the heart of living a life of love---**seeking the benefit of others**

*Being willing to make sacrifices for the good of others*

St Paul in other passages speaks of how he could make all kinds of demands on people since he was an Apostle---but he doesn’t make those demands---*because he wants to give himself* **as a servant for others**

And he’s motivated to do that out of love for God---and love for the Church

I think Paul’s attitude is very refreshing ---we unfortunately live in a time when many people take a “my way or the highway” attitude

Where there is no openness to the opinions of others

Where there is often no “benefit of the doubt” given to others when they have opinions different that our own

We see that in the divisiveness of our politics

To do a takeoff on today’s 1st reading---there are a lot of people who are willing to point the finger at others yelling---“Unclean, unclean”—when the opinions of others differ from their own

There are many who accuse others of being haters—of being bigots- of being fascists because they have a different approach to issues than themselves

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I think we would all do well to learn from St Valentine who sought to foster love rather than hate--- a man who was willing to put his own life at risk to help others live a life of love

We would do well to imitate St Paul who was willing to seek the benefit of the many rather than pleasing himself—a man who sought to please everyone in every way

**That of course—takes humility**

The teaching of the Catholic Church is that the sin of pride is the greatest of sins---*it leads to all other sins*

So the virtue of humility is the greatest of virtues

In pride people seek their own benefit even if that means disobeying God—hurting others—or causing division

In humility---like St Paul in our 2nd reading today—it leads to bending over backwards for others---seeking to help others feel comfortable---seeking the benefit of others, even above themselves

St Paul says in First Corinthians, “No one should **seek** their own **good**, but the **good** of others. (I Cor 10:24)

He says in Romans, “Let us then pursue what leads to peace and what leads to building up one another (Rom 14:19) and again, “let each of us please our neighbor for the good, for building up...” (Romans 15:2)

So often my friends—it is our pride that stands in the way of living lives of love

Our pride leads us to think---we know better than God

Our pride leads us to think *I know what I need more than God knows what I need*

We actually can think---that we know better than the God who created the entire universe out of nothing---God who said the Word---and everything there is came about----folks---just think of the arrogance of that

Pride also leads us to be so focused on what I want---what I would prefer---to think my opinions are the only ones that matter

And that of course closes doors in a relationship with others

It can lead us to fail to be open to the concerns of others---*or to even not care about the concerns of others*

That can destroy the trust necessary for husbands and wives to grow in their relationships

It can destroy the mutual respect necessary for parents and children to have a strong, loving trusting relationship

And as we’ve seen on the political level---it can leads to contempt for others with different viewpoints---even a hatred who have different points of view

On this St Valentine’s Day (weekend)---let’s strive to live lives of love rather than living with a pride that says my way is the only way

Let’s follow the example of St Paul—who sought to be all things to all people—who sought to please others rather than pleasing himself

God bless you and happy St Valentine’s Day

Humility leads to embracing