

Love in Deed and Truth

1 John 3:11-24

WHAT WE FOUND

John reached for the only Old Testament name in his letter: Cain, "who was of the evil one and murdered his brother... because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous" (3:12). We walked the whole Genesis 4 scene: sin couching at the door, the first "am I my brother's keeper?", blood crying from the ground, and even the mark of mercy on the murderer. Evil resents goodness for existing nearby, so "do not wonder that the world hates you" (3:13), and hatred is murder at a lower temperature (3:15; Matthew 5:21-22).

Love got its definition, downward from the cross: "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (3:16). And then John landed it in the wallet: whoever has the world's goods and closes his heart against a brother in need does not have God's love abiding in him (3:17). The rehearsal space for martyrdom is generosity; the Church's curriculum is the works of mercy (CCC 2447). "Let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth" (3:18).

And the hidden treasure for the accused heart: "whenever our hearts condemn us... God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything" (3:19-20). Your heart is not the supreme court; its 2 a.m. verdicts are appealed to a Judge whose complete file includes your contrition and your limping, real love, the defense Peter used on the beach: "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." The Spirit stepped on stage in the last verse (3:24); next session, we learn to test the spirits.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Jerome *Commentary on Galatians, on 6:10*

Jerome preserves the Church's most beloved memory of aged John: carried into the assembly at Ephesus, too weak to preach, the apostle would say only, "Little children, love one another." Asked why he always repeated the same words, he answered: because it is the Lord's commandment, and if it alone is done, it is enough. The man who wrote tonight's chapter spent his last strength saying its one sentence.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew, Homily 50*

Chrysostom refuses to let eucharistic devotion and mercy to the poor come apart: do not honor Christ's body in the church with silks, he preaches, while neglecting him outside where he shivers naked and hungry. The same Lord who said "This is my body" said "you did it not to me." Adorn the altar if you will, but first feed the brother; God has no need of golden chalices, but of golden souls.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Teresa of Calcutta *Her witness and sayings*

Teresa built an entire vocation out of 3:18: love proved in deed, one person at a time, in the flesh nobody else would touch. She insisted the poverty of the West is often loneliness, that we may be doing no great things, only small things with great love, and that Christ comes to us in the distressing disguise of the poor. Her Missionaries begin each day at the altar and spend it in verse 17, on purpose and in that order.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1.

Schedule one corporal work of mercy this week with a date and a name: a meal delivered, a visit made, a bill quietly covered, hours given. Love in deed requires a calendar, not a mood. Tell one group member what and when.

2.

Memorize 1 John 3:18 and pray it before every act of generosity this week, and every time you are tempted to substitute a kind comment for a costly deed.

3.

If your heart runs a nightly courtroom against you, pray 3:20 aloud at the gavel: "God is greater than my heart, and he knows everything." If scrupulosity is a real pattern for you, bring it to a regular confessor this month; that is what he is for.

MEMORY VERSE

"Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth." (1 John 3:18, RSV2CE)

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read **1 John 4:1-6**. Keep the second blank sealed one more week. As you read, write down the exact test John gives for telling a true spirit from a false one, word for word.

Catechism Connection: CCC 2447; 1033; 208