

10<sup>th</sup> Sunday (C)

5<sup>th</sup> June 2016

*Amoris Laetitia*, ch. 4

1Kings 17: *Look, your son is alive* Ps 29: *O Lord You have raised my soul from the dead*  
Gal 1: *God revealed His Son to me ...* Lk 7: 11–17: *Young man, I tell you to get up!*

The month of June is always dedicated, in the Church, to devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. That feast, celebrated on Friday — along with the corresponding feast yesterday of Mary’s Immaculate Heart — reminds us that it is in God’s divine love for us, shining forth from the heart of Jesus, that we find the desire also to reflect and return love to Him, as Mary did. It is from God, then, that we learn how to love properly — we can’t love well, if we don’t allow ourselves to learn from God’s example and teaching. Pope Francis has chosen to focus in ch. 4 of *Amoris Laetitia* on a classic Christian text on the nature of true love: St Paul’s ‘hymn to love’ in 1Cor13. He opens up the treasures of that hymn, reminding us of all that it has to teach us about loving as God loves. The text he quotes runs as follows:

“Love is patient, love is kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way, it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but

rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Cor 13:4-7).

Pope Francis speaks of each of these attributes, showing how they build up a picture of what it means to love as God loves. Pope Francis wants all married couples and families to live this sort of love. He says, for example, regarding “love is patient”:

“Unless we cultivate patience, we will always find excuses for responding angrily. We will end up incapable of living together, antisocial, unable to control our impulses, and our families will become battlegrounds.” (A.L. 92)

The Pope really wants us to learn to live and love well, and that’s why he offers lots of practical advice based on this passage of St Paul:

“Love ... is marked by humility; if we are to understand, forgive and serve others from the heart, our pride has to be healed and our humility must increase.” (A.L. 98)

“A kind look helps us to see beyond our own limitations, to be patient and to cooperate with others, despite our differences. ... Those who love are capable of speaking words of comfort, strength, consolation, and encouragement.” (A.L. 100)

“My advice is never to let the day end without making peace in the family. ‘And how am I going to make peace? By getting down on my knees?’ No! Just by a small gesture, a little something, and harmony within your family will be restored.” (A.L. 104)

“When a loving person can do good for others, or sees that others are happy, they themselves live happily and in this way give glory to God, ... If we fail to learn how to rejoice in the well-being of others, and focus primarily on our own needs, we condemn ourselves to a joyless existence, for, as Jesus said, ‘it is more blessed to give than to receive.’” (A.L. 110)  
“Married couples joined by love speak well of each other; they try to show their spouse’s good side, not their weakness and faults. ... We have to realize that all of us are a complex mixture of light and shadows. The other person is much more than the sum of the little things that annoy me. Love does not have to be perfect for us to value it.” (A.L. 113)

In concluding his comments on 1Cor13, Pope Francis recognises that living up to this picture of love is a demand that is so worth striving for:

“In family life, we need to cultivate that strength of love which can help us fight every evil threatening it. Love does not yield to resentment, scorn for others or the desire to hurt or to gain some advantage. The Christian ideal, especially in families, is a love that never gives up.” (A.L. 119)

The Pope has many other things to say in this chapter. He shows how the single life — whether lived out as a lay person in virginity, or in a consecrated way of celibacy, renouncing marriage in this life for the sake of working for the Kingdom of Heaven — are also ways of showing love; they complement the life of married couples in the Church.

Towards the end of the chapter, the Pope has some beautiful things to say to those who are growing older, and living together in love as they age:

“In the course of every marriage physical appearances change, but this hardly means that love and attraction need fade. We love the other person for who they are, not simply for their body. Although the body ages, it still expresses that personal identity that first won our heart. Even if others can no longer see the beauty of that identity, a spouse continues to see it with the eyes of love and so his or her affection does not diminish.” (A.L. 164)

This is an important element of married love in these days of better medicine when our life-span is typically so much greater: marriages need last some 40, 50, even 60+ years! How beautiful to be reminded that love can indeed “endure all things.”

Finally, summing up this chapter — Pope Francis’s own ‘hymn to love’ — he quotes Pope St John Paul II who said:

For “man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him.” (A.L. 161)