



November 4, 2018 - Message in a Bottle

Given by Rev. Mattei

Message In A Bottle is a popular song by the British rock band The Police. It talks of a lonely person, who hopes to connect with humanity by sending an SOS note in a bottle. The hope motivating the action is the last resort to prevent the feeling of despair looming at the horizons. One year later he notices a hundred billion bottles washing ashore with desperate messages from people around the world all trying to be rescued and to connect with others and find meaning, acceptance and ultimately love.¹ One particular line of the song acknowledges the power of love that may keep one alive or break one's heart.

On the Feast of All Saints, the Church acknowledges the unity of past and present saints, a shared reality in God. I am aware that remembering the saints who have preceded us brings up the broken-heartedness and the tears of those of us who have lost loved ones just recently. Our tears and sadness bespeak of the love that connects us to those who have moved on to the Church Triumphant and stand in the presence of God. Our God peers in the most remote recesses of our hearts and unveils our stinging loneliness as well as our regrets for not having loved more tenderly and more consistently. Rancor show up as well: The wound of unfinished businesses never totally faced, never completely forgiven, never entirely healed. Our God sees it all and loves us to the point of sharing high on a cross all our sorrows, all our divisions, all our shortcomings and injustices, all our pride and selfishness. He is the One who reconciles us to those we have wronged or who in their own weakness have wronged us and with whom we have no chance of reconciliation on our own.

God holds our tears in a bottle ([Ps 56:8](#)) as a message kept always in sight, a remembrance of our fragility and vulnerability. And in the experience of our fragility and vulnerability, God is revealed to us as the all connecting compassion that ties us one to the other. In that compassion, we are enabled to see the humanity of the other, in their joys and in their sorrows, in their hopes and in their fears, whether they are still living or have died already.

¹ <https://www.google.com/search?q=message+in+a+bottle+lyrics&rlz>

On the Feast of All Saints we acknowledge the inner force that unites all of us and makes us human, and this inner energy is Love. We may call each other saints as the Bible teaches us because the merciful love of God has made us so and not because we have achieved any superhuman level of holiness. That energy is inside all of us and requires attention. The ancient “Shema, Listen” ([Deut 6:1-9](#)) invites people to consider the great love of a God who reaches out to us and requests “respons-ible” love or a love response that matches God’s love for us, a response that shows that we understand the seriousness of God’s commitment to us by the way we love and serve our neighbor ([Mk 12:28-34](#)).

Obedience to the commandments, then, is not a forced imposition from an menacing god we need to appease, but a wise and spiritual virtue that can sustain us in life. We do not obey for the purpose of earning God’s love; we obey to return, in the best possible manner, the love that God has first poured over us. Obedience affords us the opportunity to touch the Divine Love Energy that is inside each of us and unites us all, both the quick and the dead.

We are not called to like everyone around us. But are we called to love them? Yes! Walking around with a negative, prejudiced, resentful, gossipy, critical mind hurts us first of all. We can’t live that way and not be destroyed from within. It hurts us because then we won’t be living out of our true self, the core being created in God’s image. If we are able to say that God is Love ([1 Jn 4:7-21](#)) then we are capable of perceiving that we are created on that foundation: our true self reflects that image, and the more we let that image come through the more we get closer to pure Love. That is how God can be seen. Without love we won’t be usable instruments for God. Without Love the world is not redeemed and cannot be transformed. Even our resistance to evil needs to come out of an inner place of Love where we are the first to be loved, redeemed and transformed.

Saints are all those in the Bible Jesus died for. And we know Jesus died for all. Can all be called “saints,” even the ones who don’t show much holiness in their lives? Do we consistently show holiness in *our* lives? Don’t we also make ignorant, stupid and un-Christian choices? Do we always shine? We are all at different levels of the Christ-consciousness, different levels of human maturity, and it is a demanding school. So, will those of us who are in undergraduate and graduate studies on our spiritual journey take the liberty of condemning those who are in lower grades?

Those who have preceded us and are now in their post-graduate levels enjoy the beatific vision of pure Beauty and pure Love. They are in the presence of God cheering

for us and praying that we may learn to enjoy even here on earth life in God. Saints united in Love waste no time or energy in hatred, negativity and fear. Even when we don't feel like loving, even when we feel isolated and powerless, even when our life feels empty, meaningless and as if it doesn't matter to some people, even when we are the target of prejudice and hatred, fearless Love is the better choice: we turn in prayer to the source and foundation of life which is Love, breath deeply, connect with that source and let the Divine Love fill and energize us for love of even our enemy.

Divine intimacy is available to us; in prayer and in meditation we all can seek and experience it. "Prayer is not primarily saying words or thinking thoughts. It is, rather, a stance. It's a way of living in the Presence. The contemplative is not just aware of God's Loving Presence, but trusts, allows, and delights in it." (R. Rohr)

May the saints both past and present sustain and encourage us in seeking and in living in God's Loving Presence especially when evil discourages us and pulls us in opposite directions. Amen