

*That we might be filled with all the fullness of God*

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What does this mean? That we might be filled with all the fullness of God. We know well that God's love is "deep and wide." We confess God is limitless and that His love for us is overwhelming. St. Paul prays for us in this Epistle that we be *rooted and grounded in that love... that we may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we might be filled with all the fullness of God.* God's love is perfect, unchangeably the same forever, and beyond our lending words to the description of it. It is impossible for us to be able to match God's love. Perhaps only the saintliest of men come close to imitating it. And yet, St. Paul prays that we too may comprehend not just God's love but be filled with the fullness of it for our present spiritual sanctification and our future salvation.

In today's Gospel, we see how the love of God overcomes and surpasses the breadth, length, depth, and height of human limitations. We see how the Divine Mercy and Pity of Jesus Christ reach out and into death to call the Widow of Nain's son back into new life. The widow and all those who mourned with her were overwhelmed by God's love as her son was revived and sat up to participate at his own funeral in a remarkable new way. It reminds us of another widow, this time from the Old Testament when the Prophet Elijah raised her son from death also. We are presented this morning with a God Who in His great love raises the dead. Our God is far more powerful than the god who is the benevolent grandfather in the sky, setting the world in motion and watching as it twists and turns by the movements of fate. We are presented with the real God who Himself is Love and not the kind of idealistic and utopian love, grounded in no reality, that is worshipped by popular culture in search of ephemeral highs and superficial thrills. The love that we encounter in Jesus Christ is the kind of Love that transforms lives, the kind of love that requires a response, the kind of love which accepts no counterfeits and no rivals.

And the question soon follows, and it is not out of place, "Well, if God's love is so great that it surpasses all understanding, that its breadth, and length, and depth, and height is immeasurable, then how can we finite creatures be filled with all of its fullness? St. Paul prays that each one of us will be filled with the fullness of God's love, that we comprehend its depth and length and height, and he acknowledges that it is beyond our intellectual capabilities to even know such love to the point of describing it. Instead of explaining what we can do to help this process along so that this love might become our own, he entrusts it all to God,

who he says is able to do *exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think*. It is impossible for us to get there on our own. We are not even able to love God perfectly, and yet St. Paul prays that God can fill us with His love. He prays that God will resuscitate hearts deadened by hatred and sin and make them into vessels of His love.

Now as good Anglican Catholics we pray this morning that we will love God through our worship. In our worship, which we offer with all our hearts, souls, and minds, and through loving our neighbors as ourselves, we indicate our intention to receive God's love, love Him in return, and love our neighbor in kind. We will confess our sins and beg that the Lord allow us to have a taste of his love in the very crumbs that fall from His table. We will come to the Altar Rail and kneel down to receive a small piece of bread and a sip of wine, which while tasting very much like bread and wine, yet we believe is mysteriously and miraculously the body and blood of Jesus Christ, of divine love Himself. There are those who rightfully say that what we receive from this Altar this morning is not just the body and blood of God the Son, Jesus Christ, but also the Love of God which defines such a Gift.

Archbishop Fulton Sheen writes, *the greatest love story of all time is contained in one tiny white host*. While we may be tempted to think this is all just mere romance, it is what the Church teaches. The Church also teaches what is expected of us who come to receive these tokens of God's love. Woe to us, who come to this Altar often, every Sunday, and receive God's love through forms of bread and wine and yet do not express or exhibit one trace of that love in our daily lives. Jesus says, *love one another as I have loved you*, and He warns His disciples before His crucifixion, *by this they shall know that you are my disciples, if you love one another*. This Sacrament that we receive kneeling beside our brothers and sisters, on the same day and almost at the very hour that our other Anglican Catholic, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox brothers and sisters are receiving Holy Communion should remind us that we are all bound together in Jesus Christ. We must love one another because we are all bound together by this great sacrament of love.

As we prepare to come to this Altar this morning, let us ask ourselves if we are truly ready to be filled with the fullness of the fire of God's Love. The fire cannot be quenched if it will purify us by burning off our sins and uniting us to our brothers and sisters in Christ. For this is true love, love that knows no boundary, and no limit, which cannot die, and reaches beyond the grave. This Love revives hearts deadened by sin to newness of life. Let us pray, *Fountain of goodness, Jesu, Lord*

*and God, cleanse us, unclean, with thy most cleansing blood; Increase our faith and love, that we may know the hope and peace which from thy presence flow. Amen.*