

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost  
Year C - 23/10/2016

Joel 2:23-32  
Psalm 65  
2 Timothy 4: 6-8,16-18  
Luke 18:15-30

**In the name of the Trinity; Creator, Redeemer, and Life-Giver...**

Words from Pedro Arrupe, the saintly 20th century Jesuit.

Falling In Love

Nothing is more practical than  
finding God, that is,  
than falling in love  
in a quite absolute, final way.

What you are in love with,  
what seizes your imagination,  
will affect everything.

It will decide  
what will get you out of bed in the morning,  
what you do with your evenings,  
how you spend your weekends,  
what you read, who you know,  
what breaks your heart,  
and what amazes you with  
joy and gratitude.

Fall in love, stay in love,  
and it will decide everything.

Pedro Arrupe, SJ

What you fall in love with decides everything!

## Jesus and the rich man (Luke 18.18-30)

It's essentially a re-expression of Jesus' teaching in today's Gospel. Here we have a ruler who claims that he has kept all the commandments and lived a virtuous life - but he doesn't get it.

Jesus challenges him to build up his treasure in heaven and he goes away, disillusioned.... It's quite simple... You can see where your heart is, what you value, care about... what really matters to you... by where you spend your money, time and energy.

Now that might sound frightening if you consider what typical middle-class Australians, like you and me, invest ourselves in. Surely we're not 'in love' with our houses, careers, superannuation, cars, travel, golf course, football club... not really!

It's probably the word 'love' that's somewhat confusing... It's more that we're operating out of largely unconscious needs and fears. We're carrying deep and unfulfilled agendas for happiness that centre around our need for approval and recognition; security; and control.

Hence our money and our energy flows to those things/activities that promise to meet these agendas. It's the love-affair we've unconsciously given ourselves to. Why otherwise would we spend the very best we've got on this stuff? It's what Jesus says - look what you spend your resources on, and you'll know what's really driving you.

Has it ever been any different? Probably not... but Jesus dreamed of a day when people would fall in love with God. A day when we would put aside our primeval fears and their agendas of necessity, and instead allow God to transform our vision and our lives.

Could anyone actually do this? In every generation there are people who do find this freedom. A very small number... but always present in the world and church of every era... and always saying to us... ‘It is possible to fall in love with God in a quite absolute, final way. And it does determine everything!’”

And so, much of my work here, as your Vicar, consists of issuing you the invitation. Fall in love with God. Give your heart to God. Stop holding back! (All that other stuff is not going to work anyway.)

Is that it then? That’s a bit anticlimactic isn’t it? Surely as your priest I should be doing more than just giving you an invitation? Surely I should be trying to *get* you to do all sorts of things: give money; support programs; attend functions; go on committees; be more responsible; be more loving...

But all of that requires changing your hearts... and not only is that impossible for me to do... it is seriously none of my business. Your heart is between you and God. (The only heart I am responsible for is my own.)

Let me explain with a metaphor that I like to describe the relationship between priest and people in a parish - one that echoes the metaphor of God’s banquet used repetitively by Jesus in his parables...

God invites people to a banquet - to the great dinner-party of life and relationship, with tables groaning with fine food and wine. That’s what God does... each and every day...

And God sends messengers to carry the invitation far and wide, so everyone knows what’s on offer. And that’s my job. It’s my job here... to issue the invitation to you - no more, no less. I will be held accountable for this work. Will I do it faithfully... sacrificially... with courage... with passion... with love? Do I give my heart to it? Do I allow my heart to be broken over it? That’s my responsibility before God.

But what you do with the invitation is entirely your business. Your hearts are your business. What happens next is between you and God.

This business - I issue God's invitation and you respond (or not) - is what happens between us every time we meet. And so once again, let me assure you...

God is reaching out to you with open arms. Let all of that other stuff that's consuming you slip away. Run to God. Fall in love with God.

That's all there is... No pressure, no manipulation, no threats, no promises, no spin, no guilt, no strategy, no expectation. Just an invitation.

But I do believe the Spirit of God is active in our midst. That there is a conversation, no matter how hidden, happening between God and you... even as we sit here this morning.

And the location of this conversation is... your heart. And so who knows what will happen from this interaction. But I do believe it is happening and I do have hope in this action of God.

And I am beginning to understand now what the saints have always taught... that at the end of the day... our only hope is in God. And I do have this hope. God will resurrect the church! God will bring all creation to fulfilment.

We are free... free to choose from the disposition of our hearts. And so... go on... Fall in love with God. It will decide everything!

In the name of God. Amen.