



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This weekend, St. Paul tells us that nothing will separate us from the love of Christ. This is important to remember, that no circumstance, no person – natural or supernatural – can separate us from His love.

In the midst of COVID-19, we might begin to question God's love. Yet, as I mentioned last week, "all things work for good for those who love God" (Romans 8:28). Even in the midst of this crisis – or any other crisis that may arise in our lives – God's love will never change.

Sometimes, we might get the impression from life circumstances that God is punishing us. We might feel that when bad things happen, it's a sign that God is fighting against us. The reality is that God is desperately in love with you and me, and there's nothing anyone can do to change that. While God may allow bad things to happen to us, it is because He has a plan to make it work for good.

The truth is that no other creature can keep us from the love of God. Even sin can't keep us separate from God... Jesus went to the Cross and died to destroy the power of sin and death. But **clinging to sin** *can* separate us from the love of God. God must punish sin, because sin is an offense against the very goodness of who God is. If we let go of our sin, if we repent (turn away) from sin, and cling to God's mercy, when God goes to punish sin, He will then pour out His mercy on us. But if we cling to sin, if we hold on to it, then when God goes to punish sin, He has to punish us. So the obvious choice is to let go of our sin and turn to God's mercy.

Why don't we, then? Why do we cling to our sin? I think there are all sorts of reasons why we choose our sin, our brokenness, over God's love and mercy. It could be that our way of life is what we are used to, and we're afraid of change and what that will mean. It could be because we are afraid to let go of our coping mechanisms that keep us numb to our emptiness. It could be that we have built our identity on the lies of sin, and to surrender those sins to God – no matter how merciful and loving we are told He is – makes us feel that our very identity will be destroyed. There are probably all sorts of other reasons, as well.

When it comes to dying to ourselves, it can be very frightening. The evil one whispers lies to our hearts saying that our sin is our identity, our desires are our identity, our brokenness is our identity. When we have to give up what seems to be our very identity, we may react violently. Yet, God tells us not to be afraid. He reminds us that we are worth every drop of His Blood. He loves us THAT MUCH!

And He tells us that our identity is NOT our brokenness, our desires, or our sin. Your identity and mine is simply this: **YOU ARE A BELOVED CHILD OF GOD**. Any other way of identifying ourselves is secondary. Our sexual desires, our sinfulness, our brokenness from how others have wounded us by their sins – none of these speak to who you are, who I am! Only this: You and I are beloved children of God.

Living in this truth, by surrendering to the mercy of God and not clinging to our sin – then we can cry out with St. Paul:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)