

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

In Saint Paul's letter to the Romans, we hear today that love is the fulfillment of the law. So often we fall into the trap of thinking that we just have to avoid doing evil and that will be enough for us to get to heaven. Saint Paul makes it clear, though, that it is not enough not to do things ("You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not steal; you shall not covet..." Romans 13: 9), but to do the good of love – loving our neighbor as ourselves.

It is important to recognize this or else we might be tempted to justify ourselves and say, "I know I've not been perfect (after all, no one is), but I'm not as bad as that person over there. Well, let me tell you all that he has done..." It is not the evil we avoid, but the love that we give that makes us like God, that united us to His ever-loving heart.

If love is the key and center of the Christian life, we have to ask ourselves, "Do we love well?" It is hard to take a good, honest look at ourselves to answer this question. Too often our love for others is really a veiled self-love. What do I mean by that? I mean that too often when we say (or even think) we love someone else, it is really secretly seeking our advantage. For instance, I like to listen to her – her need to speak to me makes *me* feel important, needed. I like to be around his – he make *me* laugh, makes *me* feel good.

When we look into our motives, we see so often that they are selfish. True love shows itself when things don't go well, when helping someone is a problem or a burden, when we struggle to be with a person (we see this clearly in the marriage vows, which are given not just for good times, but in bad, not just health, but sickness, etc.). When we take an honest look at the way we treat the people around us – our neighbors – the way we speak to them and think about them, do we really love them as much as we love ourselves.

Failure at this is not a reason to get discouraged or despondent. Rather, it is just another opportunity to recognize how much we are really in need of God's grace, love and mercy. We beg God for the grace to be changed, that we may truly be like God and love with a selfless love.