

Fr Ben's Weekly Reflection

30th Sunday Ordinary Time

Oct 25, 2026

What is love? Oh that burning question that countless philosophers, poets, artists, and countless music albums have pondered…stay tuned for the "break up album" to see how they were wrong.

Oftentimes love is used synonymously with "I like." "I love cake. I love warm, sunny days. I love the (fill in your favorite sports team)." Love here is a basic liking or affection toward something. It's passing, fleeting, or may change based on our likes or dislikes changing. We wouldn't use love mentally in this same context for other things like family. We would say "I love you, Mom" with very different intent.

That raises an interesting distinction: intent. Words can be meaningless if there is no intent behind them. Saying "I love cake" doesn't carry any obligation or duty. If cake is a desert option, I can choose it…or something else. Because I said "I love cake" doesn't mean I always pick or eat cake.

"I love you" carries weight when it is directed to a person. Now there are duties and obligations. A man and a woman may start as acquaintances, move to friendship, and eventually romantic interest. When "I love you" enters the scene, there is a lot of contexts for that. Now, "I love you" says "I want to spend my life with you and only you. I want to give myself totally to you." Marriage is the sacrament that seals that love before God. It's a public, lifelong promise with the fruit of that love personified in children.

But what if the intent isn't there? If we treat love like the first example of mere affection, a fit of emotion, or worse, used for my own gain, then "I love you" is the biggest lie we can ever tell. Many of our friends, neighbors, or even ourselves have been hurt deeply by these lies in the name of love.

Coming full circle, loving God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves fits that image of marriage. God showed us love by sending His Son, Jesus. Jesus shows that love by giving Himself totally to the Father's will for love of us. Nothing we did earned that love. Furthermore, Jesus died for all! Not just a few "good-ish" people. Therefore, we ought to think of giving ourselves totally to God.

That is personified in how we love our neighbors (which is everyone). We don't always have to "like" them, but we ought to love them as brothers and sisters loved by God as well. I can't say "I love you God" and blow leaves in the neighbor's yard to get even for something he did.

Love takes sacrifice. It means not letting my schedule, passions, emotions, wounds, or hurts interfere with giving myself to God and to my neighbor. Love is bigger than me: it is God Himself.