

LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS

To say love “bears all things” is to recognize that love co-exists on earth with imperfection. Love recognizes the danger of idolizing human relationships, expecting them to provide what only heaven can offer.

In what ways have I failed to “hold my peace” and allowed my tongue to hurt others? Have I spoken ill of people with a desire to cause them harm or paint a negative picture of them in the mind of others? What were my hidden motivations for doing so?

How can I humble myself in seeking reconciliation with those whom I have hurt with my tongue and in making amends? Do I need to forgive anyone who has spoken negatively of me?

LOVE BELIEVES ALL THINGS

The word Saint Paul uses here is closer to “trust.” With this deeply rooted trust, love sets free, it does not try to possess, control, or dominate. Love does not live in a permanent state of suspicion toward others.

How have my personal insecurities affected the way I relate with others? Do I seek in subtle or not so subtle ways to control or dominate people and situations? How can I foster the freedom and independence of the people I love?

Is the notion that God loves me unconditionally just a pious idea or a lived experience in my life? Am I hiding myself from God in any way because I don’t trust in his unconditional love?

LOVE HOPES ALL THINGS

Hope, in the full Christian sense of the word, is the virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ’s promises.

To what or whom do I turn in my hope and desire for satisfaction of the deepest desires of my heart? Have I made false gods of anything on this earth?

Everyone must face the reality and fear of aging and dying – our own and that of those we love. In the face of that fear, where do I place my hope? Am I hoping in science? Am I hoping in make-up or cosmetic surgery? Or am I truly hoping in the resurrection of my body?

LOVE ENDURES ALL THINGS

This means that love bears every trial with trust and a constant readiness that never gives up, even in the darkest hour. Love does not become despondent in the face hardships or in the face of human sinfulness. Trust in God’s merciful plan to set all right allows us to carry on in joyful hope and to be a channel of God’s love and mercy in other people’s hardships and sinfulness. Lord, I’m often tempted to bitterness and resentment because of the trials that I and others must endure in this life. Teach me to love.

Are there sins, trials, or hardships in my own life or the life of others that I think are beyond God’s merciful reach?

Do I live in fear of the trials and hardships I or others I love may face?

LOVE IS PATIENT

Pope Francis insightfully observes that we encounter problems whenever we think that relationships or people ought to be perfect - everything then makes us impatient, everything makes us react aggressively. Unless we cultivate patience, we will always find excuses for responding angrily. Love is patient. Oftentimes, I am not. Lord, teach me to love.

How do I respond to others’ and my own faults throughout the day? Am I willing to “give room” to people to be who they are without demanding they be who I want or “need” them to be? Am I quick to react with dismay, disdain, or aggression?

Am I quick to criticize people who annoy me because of the way they act or think? If so, what underlying attitudes do I use to justify the idea that these people should think or act the way I do?

LOVE IS KIND

Lord, when I’m focused on myself, spending myself for others is a burden I’d prefer to avoid.

Sometimes a person’s motives in serving others remain mixed with self-serving. I may serve others for the praise of doing so or to reinforce a prideful sense of myself as a virtuous person, etc. Do I honestly serve others for others, expecting nothing in return?

LOVE IS NOT JEALOUS

Love is concerned for, desires, and rejoices in the good fortune of others. Jealousy at others' good fortune is thus a sign of love's absence. Love is not jealous. Sometimes I am. Lord, teach me to love.

When other people prosper in ways I desire to prosper, am I happy for them or only sad for myself?

Am I grateful for and content with the good things with which God has blessed me? Do I sometimes grumble that I haven't been granted what so-and-so has?

Am I generous in sharing my good fortune with others? How can I be more so?

LOVE IS NOT BOASTFUL

Those who love do not speak too much about themselves. Rather, they are focused on others. Love does not seek vainglory or to be the center of attention. Sometimes, I do. Lord, teach me to love.

What are ways that I seek to draw attention to myself? What am I looking for, what am I desiring when I do so?

LOVE IS NOT ARROGANT

Lord, how can I embrace others in their weakness when I often loathe my own weakness and hide behind masks of having it together? Free me from the lies that see weakness as something unlovable, something to be rejected.

Are there any ways in which I consider myself superior to others?

Do I secretly loathe myself when my weaknesses are on display? Do I loathe others when their weaknesses are on display?

LOVE IS NOT RUDE

Those who love are thoughtful and gentle. They're not impolite, harsh, abrasive, or rigid. Love does not expect from others what only God can provide. Sometimes I do. Lord, teach me to love.

Am I demanding or domineering in seeking "what I want" in my relationships? Do I fail to respect the freedom of others because their desires conflict with mine?

LOVE DOES NOT INSIST ON ITS OWN WAY

This means that love does not demand its own interest, but is ready to sacrifice them for the sake of the interests of others.

In what ways am I quick to assert my own interests and override the interest of others?

LOVE IS NOT IRRITABLE

Being irritable has to do with a hidden agitation that we foster internally rather than bearing with and forgiving one another. Such irritation, unchecked, can grow into a hostility waiting to erupt.

What are the things others do in my life that irritate me? Have I fostered that irritation?

LOVE IS NOT RESENTFUL

Love requires a generous openness to understanding, to forbearance, and forgiveness. This isn't easy.

What were my relationships like with loved ones growing up? Was I loved unconditionally in my mistakes and weaknesses? Was I mocked or harshly criticized? Who in my family do I need to forgive for failing to love me as I am?

LOVE DOES NOT REJOICE AT WRONG BUT REJOICES IN THE RIGHT

Rejoicing in the right expresses an attitude of delighting in and fighting for the true goodness and dignity of the human person. In this context, it is fitting to examine our conscience regarding our sexual attitudes and behaviors.

Do I "rejoice in the right" of God's marvelous plan for sexual identity, sexual desire, and sexual love or do I foster ideas and attitudes that treat others as objects for my own or others' selfish pleasure? Am I master of my own sexual desires, or do they master me? How can I grow in "the freedom for which Christ has set me free"?

What distorted or diseased ideas and images of the body and of sexuality am I in need of surrendering to the Lord? Have I ever invited God's healing light into my ideas and attitudes toward my own body and sexuality?