

## **A reflection for the fourth week of Lent**

### *Love is Arduous*

Love is the chameleon that hides in the hue of everything and disappears into any context available.

But not so fast. This love isn't just anything. It involves heart and will, soul and life, mind and strength. It requires a covenantal fidelity. It makes demands. Love is not mere ardor; it is arduous.

The ordinances from the book of Exodus are explicit enough on how love is exercised in human relations. We shall not wrong a resident alien. (Get that.) We shall not abuse widows or orphans. If we do, God's wrath will be upon us. If we lend money to the poor, we must not treat them as creditors or exact interest from them. (Now it is getting a little uncomfortable.) If we take any thing as collateral that a neighbor needs, we must return it before the sun goes down. (So much for sweet romanticism.)

With Jesus, love is even more irksome. Not only does he identify love of neighbor with our love of ourselves and of God; he makes it quite clear that love is serving others, even laying down our lives for them.

Anyone who thinks that love is an easy path should consult the "more excellent way" of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. It is a passage, often heard at weddings, that could profitably be read every day and night of married life.

What is love? Love is patience. It is kindness. It is not jealous or conceited, rude or selfish. It does not take offense, nor is it resentful. It is always ready to trust, to excuse, and to endure whatever comes.

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