

“If you can remember anything about the sixties, you weren't really there.”

Paul Kantner

That famous quote by Paul Kantner really sums up the Sixties, as does the song: ‘All You Need Is Love,’ by The Beatles.

Paul Kantner was the main man in the 60’s band Jefferson Airplane and, although brought up as a Catholic, in his teenage years he went into total revolt.

Among other drugs, he used LSD frequently to enhance, as he thought, his spiritual awareness.

And that’s why he said that if you can remember the 60’s you weren’t really there.

If you hadn’t been on drugs, you weren’t fully alive, according to his warped understanding of what being alive actually means.

I can certainly remember the 60’s, and my bit of teenage rebellion was, when I was 18, to become a Catholic Christian in 1968 at the height of Free Love, and Flower Power, having been pretty much anti-God for all of my teenage years.

You could say that for the last 42 years I’ve been a lapsed atheist!!

But seriously; I’ve never looked back, and never regretted that commitment to Jesus Christ.

I want to go back now to: ‘All You Need Is Love,’ which I briefly mentioned earlier.

If you read the lyrics they’re actually rather banal, and make little sense at all in explaining what love is all about.

That, I think, sums up the 60’s in a nutshell.

And the problem is, that philosophy of not grounding human love in the love of God made flesh in Jesus of Nazareth, has pervaded our minds, our hearts, and our world ever since. Rather than liberating us to love after the manner of Jesus of Nazareth, it has made our hearts coarse, selfish, and unloving.

But what do we mean by that little word ‘love,’ when we reflect together about the way we live out our faith in Love Incarnate, Christ Jesus?

Love can be used to mean many things in English from, ‘I love that carpet,’ to ‘I’ll love you forever.’

The New Testament was written in Greek, as that was the common language of the Roman Empire at that time, and it has several words to describe different aspects of love.

One of them is agape: but what does it mean in English?

Perhaps a helpful way to understand it is to hear the words of Jesus in the Gospel of John, where He explains the depths of the love of God: “For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” Jn. 3: 16

The love which flowed from Jesus on the Cross for each of us; love which doesn’t count the cost.

Love which, in Paul’s words from his chapter on love in 1 Corinthians: “Always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” 1 Cor. 13: 7

Agape love....

This is the aspect of love Paul says we need within us.

The Christians in Corinth weren’t following this way of love. They were inward looking, and followed the Lord very much on their terms.

Yes, they were a gifted Church, but at the same time immature, and unspiritual.

Because of their lack of agape love, the Church was divided and weak, and failing in the main job given by the Lord; to bring everyone to believe in Him, and be immersed in His agape love.

If we’re to be Spirit-filled mirrors, in which people can see a clear reflection of Jesus, we need to ask Him to bring to birth in each of us His agape love.

To pray for it, so that this Christian community reflects Jesus out to the world, and attracts the world to the Church.

We don't want our Church to be like that in Laodicea in the Book of Revelation, where Jesus says to it: "I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other!" Rev. 3: 15 - 16

In the Gospel for today, Jesus is in Nazareth where He was brought up.

He goes to synagogue on Saturday; reads to the congregation the passage from Isaiah about the Messiah, sits down and says: "The Scripture you've just heard has been fulfilled this very day!" Lk. 4: 21

Everyone was amazed by what He said, and they want Him to perform miracles of healing as He'd done in Capernaum.

But Jesus tests their real commitment to Him by reminding them of two incidents in the Old Testament where the Lord had helped Gentiles, not Jews.

The bringing back to life of the son of a Gentile widow, and the cure from leprosy of Naaman the Syrian, another Gentile.

Would they be loving enough to see that Jesus had come to call everyone to Him, both Jew and Gentile?

Would they be loving enough to follow Jesus on His terms, not theirs?

They're not. They try to grab hold of Jesus, and throw Him off the side of the hill to His death because they didn't like what He was saying.

In his Gospel Luke asks us to journey with Jesus.

He takes us on: "An ongoing exodus out of the closed inward-looking self towards [our] liberation through self-giving, and thus towards authentic self-discovery and indeed the discovery of God: 'Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it' Lk 17:33 as Jesus says [in Luke's Gospel].

In these words, Jesus portrays his own path, which leads through the Cross to the Resurrection.

Starting from the depths of his own sacrifice and of the love that reaches fulfilment therein, he also portrays in these words the essence of love and indeed of human life itself." Pope Benedict XVI: Deus Caritas Est; 1: 6

Luke uses the hill Nazareth's built on as a reminder to us of the Hill of Calvary.

The people of Nazareth are like the leaders of the Jewish nation who will do all they can to silence Jesus forever by crucifying Him.

The people of Nazareth have just heard Jesus say in the synagogue: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." Lk. 4: 18

And yet they want to shut Him up, to kill Him, because He won't do exactly what they want Him to do.

But Jesus just: "Walked right through the crowd and went on his way."

Lk. 4: 30

As the Crucifixion won't be able to snuff out, or death hold onto Jesus; likewise this violent crowd is unable to do the same, because the Spirit of the Lord is in Him

Today, after hearing this, we have to decide if we want the sort of love Jesus offers us.

And may the Spirit of the Lord, which indwelt Jesus: "Show us Jesus. Lead us to him.

Teach us to know and love him, so that we too become capable of true love and be fountains of living water in the midst of a thirsting world."

Pope Benedict XVI: Deus Caritas Est; Conclusion 42