

LITURGY OF GOD'S LOVE STORY

Aims of this Exercise:

- ✓ *To meditate on the words "God Loved the word"*
- ✓ *To grasp the meaning of God's plan of Salvation.*
- ✓ *To grow in the love of God.*

Uses of these Notes:

- ✓ *Personal meditation and prayer.*
- ✓ *Sermons, talks, catechism instructions,*
- ✓ *Prayer Sessions..*

1st Part: Preliminary Instruction.

Differences between the words liking and loving.

A love relationship is more than just 'falling in love'. Love is decision, a will to love, a commitment; love is more than an accident, it is much more than just happening to fall in love!

- Liking is human, loving is divine.
- Liking turns inwards to ourselves, loving turns us outwards to others.
- God does not like anyone, He loves all.
- We cannot like all, yet we can love all.
- Liking is a feeling, not a will

A Love Story progresses through Three Steps

1st Step: An Exchange of Words

- Somebody decides to love another person. He wants to love. He wills to love. He commits himself to love him or her.
- The lover approaches the loved one. He speaks to the loved one. Through words, he discloses his love.
- The loved one may or may not respond to him.
- We are free to accept or to reject love..
- If the love offer is spurn, a love relationship, a love story will not take off
- If the loved one does respond with loving words, a love relationship is on!
- In the course of time, if the lover and the loved one keep on exchanging words, their love relationship will grow stronger and stronger..

2nd Step: An Exchange of Gifts.

- As their love grows, the lover feels the need to express his love not only through words but even more, through gifts. Gifts speak louder than words.
- A love-gift as a symbol of self-offering.
- By offering gifts, the lover along with it, gives himself, in promise to the one he loves.

- The acceptance, of gifts in the context of a love relationship, binds closer together the lover and the loved one.
- The loved one is free, however, to accept or not to accept the gift.
- If the loved one rejects the gift, the love story, comes to a premature death.
- If he accepts the gift, their love relationship grows stronger and the love story goes on.
- The loved-one also reciprocates by offering gifts in return, gift for gift..
- The exchange of gifts goes on till one day!

3rd Step : Union – Fusion

- The lover offers himself as the final gift to the loved one, unconditionally, totally and forever!
- If the loved one does not reciprocate with the gift of self, their love relationship painfully dies.
- If, however, the loved one reciprocates with a total, and unconditional offer of himself to the lover, their love relationship will reach its climax namely, fruition, union, fusion, communion!
- At the human level the most striking example of this mutual self offering is marriage. Marriage is the final stage of a love relationship between a man and a woman whereby; they become ‘one flesh’.

2nd Part How God’s Love Story with us Began

- From all eternity, God decided, he willed to love us!
- He loved us and he committed Himself to love us for ever and ever unconditionally!
- Do not ask God, why He wanted to love us that much!
- Love is a free gift. Love has no logic! In a way love is blind.
- Read and comment on the following Texts:
Ephesians 1/3-10
1 Peter 2/9-10
1 John 3/1-3; 7-10

**God’s love story began from God’s generous and absolutely free decision to love us. We cannot merit it, nor deserve it.
We can only accept it or spurn it**

God’s Love Story with us progressed through three steps also

1st Step : An Exchange of Words.

The Old Testament as the Revelation of God’s Love

In the past God spoke to our ancestors many times and in many ways through the Prophets (Hebrews 1/1).

- From the very beginning, God disclosed – in words- his love for us human beings through prophets and saints..

- He spoke to us many times and in many ways. He gave us loving words.
- The entire Old Testament is the disclosure and revelation of God's love for us men and women.
- We – mankind - were left free to accept or to reject God's love.
- Fortunately, the best people of old: the prophets, the saints and the seers of the Old Testament responded to God's advances of love with words of love.
- All the psalms, prayers, canticles and hymns in the Old Testament are the loving human responses to the revelation of God's love.
- Thus, in the Old Testament, God's love story took off!
- For many years God spoke to men, and men spoke to God with the burning words of love. The love relationship between God and man grew stronger and stronger.

2nd Step : An Exchange of Gifts

The Gift of Jesus as the revelation of God's love in The New Testament *'But now in our days, God spoke to us through his Son'. (Hebrews 1/2)*

- When God's love story with us – human beings - had reached maturity, God offered us a gift, the greatest possible gift; none other than his only Son our Lord Jesus Christ!
- Some people rejected him (*'He came to his own, but his own received him not'*)
- Yet, fortunately, the best representatives of human kind received him: Our Lady, St. Joseph, The Disciples, his later followers, the saints, the Church throughout the centuries.
- All of them welcomed God's gift, our Lord Jesus Christ.
- They responded to God's loving gift by giving God in return the best gift they could ever offer: 'themselves'.
- The words of Our Lady. *"Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done unto me according to your word"* – eloquently express the response of the best of humanity to God's gift.
- Thus, the love relationship between God and mankind was strongly established and sealed.

3rd Step : Union – Fusion –

- After humanity through its best representatives accepted God's precious gift,- Our Lord Jesus Christ.- And offered itself completely to God
- God took us to himself in the most intimate union possible. God sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts to make us sharers of his own life.
- He made us, in a true sense, his children. He came to dwell in our hearts. In a mysterious way, he made us divine!
- **On Pentecost, through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, God's Love Story with us, men and women of all ages, reached its climax**
- **In a wonderful and incomprehensible way God and we became one!**

Concluding Prayer.

- **Let us pause** for a while in silent wonder and adoration.
- **Read and ponder:**
 - Ephesians 1/3-10
 - 1 Peter 2/9-10
 - 1 John 3/1-3; 7-10
- **Let us thank God** for his boundless, infinite and eternal love.
Hymns: 'What Thanks Can I render Thee'. and 'It was love that made us'.
- **Let us offer ourselves** completely to him in loving self-surrender.
Hymns: 'Take and Receive'. and 'All that I Am'".

APPENDIX**Suggested Eucharistic Celebration on****GOD'S LOVE STORY****The Mass as a Memorial of God's Loving Dealings with Us"****Instructions to the Celebrant:**

As you proceed with the Mass, explain to the audience how the very structure of the Mass is sort of re-enactment of God's Love Story.

In the Mass and through the Mass, in a sacramental way, we relive the different stages of God's Love Story

Make the whole Eucharistic celebration an experience of joy and love!

Encourage the participants to pray and sing with gusto

ORDER OF THE MASS**Welcoming Rites:**

Welcome the participants to the Eucharistic Celebration.

Ask them to welcome one another.

Remind them that all of us are called to the table of the Lord".

Sing a couple of joyful hymns.

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Penitential Rites:

Ask for God's pardon

Mutual reconciliation

Sign of peace.

1st Part of the Mass :
1st. Step Of God's Love Story
THE LITURGY OF THE SPOKEN WORD

AN EXCHANGE OF LOVING WORDS BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.

Old Testament Readings

God speaks to us

First Reading (*Choose your Readings*)

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➤ Ezekiel	34/8-16; 22-31;	God our Shepherd
➤ Isaiah	49/8-13	God our Shepherd
➤ Isaiah	43/1-3; 5-7	God's love for his people
➤ Isaiah	49/14-17; 63/8-9	God's love for his people
➤ Jeremiah	31/3-6	God's love for his people
➤ Hosea	2/19-22; 11/1-4; 14/4-8	God's love for his people.
Zechariah	2/8	God's love for his people

Old Testament Psalms and prayers

We – men – respond to God

Psalms and Hymns (*Choose ypour Psalms*)

- Psalm 8. God's Glory and Man's Dignity.
- Psalm 9. Thanking God for his Love and Justice
- Psalm 16. A prayer for Confidence
- Psalm 23. The Lord is My Shepherd
- Psalm 34. In Praise of God's Goodness.
- Psalm 36. God is With Us.
- Psalm 63. Longing for God.
- Psalm 78. God and His People.
- Psalm 103. The Love of God.
- Psalm 106. The Lord's Goodness to His People.
- Psalm 107. 113. 127. In Praise of God's Goodnes
- Psalm 146, 147, 148, 149. Songs of Praise.

New Testament Readings

God speaks to us

Second Reading (*Choose your Readings*)

Mathew	6/24-34 :	God the Father's Love and Concern.
Mathew	12/15-21 :	God's Chosen Servant.
Luke	4/16-21 :	Jesus in the Synagogue of Nazareth
Luke	11/5-13 :	Ask and You Will Receive
Luke	6/32-36 :	Love for Enemies

Luke 15/11-32 : The Prodigal son
 John 3/14-17 : Jesus and Nicodemus
 John 10/7-17 : The Good Shepherd.

New Testament Prayers
We – men – respond to God
Prayers of the Faithful

Request the participants to prepare their prayers of the faithful as a personal response to the advances of God's love to us.

2nd Part of the Mass :
2nd. Step Of God's Love Story
THE LITURGY OF THE INCARNATED WORD
AN EXCHANGE OF GIFTS \ BETWEEN GOD AND US

Take Cannon IIII

Consecration..... God's Gift of Jesus His Son to us.
The Body and Blood of Christ.

Attention Celebrant:

Before consecration, explain to the participants in a few words how at Mass, the very **Body and Blood of Christ** is offered for us and to us as the Gift of God The Father's love.

In the Prayers of the Third Canon – in return - we offer **ourselves** in love to God as the best gift we can offer Him.

Attention Celebrant

Comment and paraphrase the following words of the Canon: prayer of “ **May he make us an everlasting gift to you...with Mary the Virgin Mother of God...**”
Pause for a while and ask the participants to make a personal, total and unconditional gift of themselves to God.

3rd Part of the Mass :
23rd. Step Of God's Love Story
UNION - FUSION - COMMUNION

Attention Celebrant

Explain a few words that Sacramental Communion signifies and affects our final union with God: It implies a certain fusion with God whereby, we become divine.

As a sacrament, Communion at Mass not only signifies but also causes our union with God. It unites God and us in an intimate embrace of love. “COM-M-UNION”.

Concluding Rites:

1. Thanksgiving:
Ask the participants to thank God aloud and spontaneously for His love
2. Hymn singing.
Have them to sing with gusto two or three hymns
3. Solemn Blessing:
4. Dismissal: Send the participants in joy and peace to love and serve the Lord.

GOD'S LOVE STORY

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