

***“As I have loved you, so you also should love one another!”***

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen*

**Once upon a time**, in 1976, a car accident tore open the head of a 21-year-old fellow by the name of Peter. His brain was damaged and he fell into a deep coma. Doctors told Peter’s family and friends that he probably wouldn’t survive and, if he did, he’d always be in a comatose state.

One of the people to hear that sad news was ...Linda, the girl Peter had planned to marry. In the sad days ahead, Linda spent all her spare time in the hospital.

Night after night, she’d sit at Peter’s bedside, pat his cheek, rub his brow, and talk to him.

***“It was like we were on a normal date,”*** she said.

All the while, Peter remained in the coma, unresponsive to Linda’s loving presence. Night after night, for 3<sup>1/2</sup> months, Linda sat at Peter’s bedside, speaking words of encouragement to him, even though he gave no sign that he heard her.

Then, one night, Linda saw Peter’s big toe move. A few nights later, she saw an eyelash flutter. That was it! That was all she needed. Against the advice of doctors, family, and friends, she quit her job and became his constant companion.

She spent hours massaging his arms and legs.

Eventually, Linda arranged to take him home –her home. She spent all her savings on a swimming pool and even had a special apparatus installed to lower Peter into the pool. She hoped the sun and water would restore life to Peter’s motionless limbs.

Then came the day when Peter... spoke. It was only a grunt, but Linda understood it. Gradually, with Linda’s help, those grunts turned into words –clear words.

Finally, the day came when Peter was able to ask Linda’s father if he could marry her. Linda’s father said:

***“When you can walk down the aisle, Peter, she’ll be yours.”***

Two years later, Peter walked down the aisle of Our Lady of Pompeii, Catholic Church, in Chicago. He used a walker, **BUT**, he was walking!

Every television station in Chicago ‘covered’ that ‘storybook-wedding.’ Newspapers across the country carried pictures of Linda and Peter.

Celebrities phoned to congratulate them. People, from as far away as Australia, sent them letters and presents. Families, with loved ones in comas, called to ask for advice.

Today, Peter is living a normal life. He talks slowly, **BUT**, clearly. He walks slowly, **BUT** without a walker. And he and Linda ...have a beautiful child!

I share that true story with you because it is a wonderful commentary on Our Lord’s words, which I just read to you from St. John’s Gospel:

***“I give you a new commandment: ‘Love one another.’ As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples: if you have love for one another.”*** Jn. 13:34-35

*You don't need me to tell you we live in a pretty mixed up, screwy world; one, which, at times, seems to have lost both --its moral and political compass. If there is one thing we need today, it is to rediscover the power of love, specifically, the kind of love that Jesus preached.*

*The story of Linda and Peter illustrates that such a love has tremendous power, even a miraculous power!*

*It has the power to bring people back from the brink of death... to life. It has the power to bring people back from hopeless sickness... to perfect health. It has the power to inspire people the world-over and to give them new hope... as did Linda's love for Peter!*

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*In the early 1980's, there was a film out called, **"Quest for Fire"** about, oddly enough, the discovery of fire. It was the discovery of fire, 80,000 years ago, that saved the human race from extinction. It was the discovery of fire, 80,000 years ago, that made it possible for them to make tools for survival and to protect themselves against the cold, as well as from predators.*

*Today, people on the planet Earth are beginning to worry that we are headed for total extinction.*

*Today, people on the planet Earth are beginning to worry that we are on the brink of global disaster.*

*This time it is not from something basic, like the lack of fire, but from something even more basic --the lack of human love, the kind of love that Jesus preached, the kind of love Linda had for Peter.*

*This invites us to ask a frightening question.*

*What, exactly, is that frightening question, you ask?*

***Well, it's about time ---I am glad you asked that question ...because this is the question:***

*Will someone, 80,000 years from now, make a film celebrating the **rediscovery of love** by the human race in the 2-thousands's? ...the kind of love that... Jesus preached; the kind of love that... Linda had for Peter?*

*Only the future and the Christian community will answer that question.*

*Only you and I, and millions of Christians like us, hold the answer to that question --somewhere, deep down in our hearts.*

*Today's Gospel is an invitation for each of us to look into our hearts and to see how we, ourselves, are answering that question by our own lives... of love --in our workplace, in our neighborhood, and, especially, within our families. For we must begin to change the world there --or we won't change it at all!*

*I close with these words:*

***"Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides, thermal heat, and gravity, we shall harness, for God, the energies of love, and then, for a 2<sup>nd</sup> time in the history of the world ... man will have discovered... fire!"***

*May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen*