**4th Sunday**

**THEME:** CREATED AND REDEEMED TO LOVE

**READINGS:** Jeremiah 1: 4-5, 17-19/ 1 Cor. 12: 31-13:13/ Luke 4: 21-30

By Very Rev. Fr. John Louis ([http://frlouis.com](http://frlouis.com/))

The message of the Lord to the prophet Jeremiah is to all of us: ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you’ (Jer. 1:4). Beloved, we have been created not by chance, but out of the will and LOVE of God: He made a free and deliberate choice to create each of us, and acted on it accordingly. So we have become living beings out of the LOVE of God! [You may read Psalm 139 to appreciate more how wonderfully God has made us.]

Created in the *image and likeness* of God (Gen. 1:26) who is LOVE (1 Jn. 4:8), we have been ‘designed’ to LOVE. Indeed, we have not only been created out of God’s LOVE, we have also been redeemed out of His LOVE: ‘For God so LOVED the world that He gave us His only Son that whosoever believes may not perish but have eternal life’ (Jn. 3:16); and ‘greater LOVE has no one than to lay down his/her life for his/her friends’ (Jn. 15:13).

Created and redeemed by divine LOVE, we are to LOVE God in return and to demonstrate our love for Him by loving others, also created in the *image and likeness* of Divine LOVE (1 Jn. 4:7-16). The word ‘love’, however, can be misused and misinterpreted as it often happens on Valentine Day (soon to be celebrated). To prevent us from the ‘**valentinization**’ of love, let us consider St. Paul’s ‘definition’ of LOVE in the second reading.

I would like to illustrate St. Paul’s definition with the human HEART, which often symbolizes LOVE. Indeed, LOVE is the HEART of life – both spiritual and social life. As the human heart distributes blood which supplies nutrients (vitamins, proteins) to the various parts of the body, so LOVE supplies nourishment to our spiritual and social life. St. Paul tells us some of the *vitamins* and *proteins* that LOVE supplies to various parts of our social-spiritual life: patience [*vitamin* A], kindness [*vitamin* B1], contentment [*vitamin* B2], humility [*vitamin* B3], forgiveness [*vitamin* B4], mercy [*vitamin* B5], tolerance [*vitamin* B6], selflessness [*vitamin* C], truth [*vitamin* D], politeness [*vitamin* E], trust [*white blood cell*], and endurance [*red blood cell*] (1 Cor. 13:4-7).

Beloved anytime, for instance, we are patient with or kind to someone else, LOVE (the HEART of our life) supplies vitality [*vitamins*] into the stream of not only our social life but our spiritual life as well; because whatever act of patience or kindness is done to the least of the brethren is done to the Lord as well (Mt. 25:31-40). Similarly, anytime we don’t keep a record of an offense done against us, but rather forgive, LOVE (the HEART of our life) supplies vitality [*vitamins*] into the stream of not only our social life but our spiritual life as well; for the Father forgives us our trespasses as we forgive those of others. And, anytime we are humble, LOVE (the HEART of our life) supplies vitality [*vitamin*] into the stream of not only our social life but our spiritual life as well; for God exalts the humble. Etc.

Finally, then, as any shortage of blood supply to any part of the human body can become a problem, so let us persevere in LOVE, constantly supplying our spiritual and social life with good nourishment. But if we are short of the blood of LOVE, let us pray to the Lord Jesus Christ to infuse into us a new supply of His most precious and redeeming blood shed on the cross of Calvary. Amen!