



A Sermon preached in Christ Church, Grosse Pointe, Michigan
by The Reverend Andrew Van Culin, *Rector*

The 3rd Sunday in Easter (Year A)
23 April 2023

In the Name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Thank you, Lisa!

Friends, the invitation of our *To Excel in Love* Endowment Campaign is about sustaining our fundamental purpose as a community – that we, the Christian community shaped and enliven by this place of worship and friendship, will *Excel in Love*.

Not just dabble in love.

Not just experiment or test the waters of love.

Not just treat love like a side-hustle or hobby we'll really get to when the kids are gone and or we've retired from whatever it is that really drives our lives.

No, we've been called by God to *excel* in love – here and now! Today and tomorrow, and the day and week and years after that.

We're called to commit our hearts to it; to dive in with our whole heart, soul, and mind (in the old words of Saint Mark); in order that love will become our highest aspiration and greatest joy.

What does such love look like? It looks like Jesus stopping for a suffering woman, eating with a tax-collector, touching a leper, or stooping down to lift up a woman caught in her shame. It looks like tired yet resilient woman sitting on a bus for all women and men who had been denied that simple dignity for generations. It looks like a committed young man standing bloodied and beaten in the face of hate, yet resisting the profound human urge to retaliate with hate himself.



But it needn't be so grand! You see, it also looks like a busy business-man or -woman who takes a morning off to tutor kids from the neighboring town. Or a young mother or father, or a respected elder in the community, who gives up her morning routine to teach kids to bake bread and about God's love. Or a man who toils in the quiet hours afterwork to fix a pew or a woman who makes sure the table is prepared.

You see, to *excel in love* is a way of life that takes us *beyond of ourselves* by expanding the reach of our heart to embrace not only ourselves and our families, but our friends and neighbors and even strangers whom we are blessed to meet.

What Jesus reveals to us, as he did to Cleopas and the first disciples, is that this way of excelling love is the pathway to abundance of life and fullness of joy.

Friends, this was the commitment many of us made at our Confirmation – and our parent's made on our behalf at our Baptism – that we would commit ourselves to excel in love for God and for our neighbor.

The invitation of this Campaign is to commit again. To re-commit ourselves in heart, soul, and mind to God's way of love for the world, and to ensure that such love is sustained for our children today and their children tomorrow.

Let us conclude with the To Excel in Love Campaign Prayer.

The Lord be with you. | Let us pray:

God of Love and Joy; your Son proclaimed that in pursuing your way of generous, enduring love we will find completeness of joy, and that in taking up your life of service and abundance we will find fullness of life. We give you thanks for your ever-present generosity, the gift of your abiding love revealed in your Son and shining throughout the generations here at Christ Church. Fill us now, we pray, with confident hope that we may pursue your way of generous love for one another and the world, for this generation and those yet to come. In the fellowship of your Son who loves us and in union with your Spirit who fills us, we pray with gratitude and joy. Amen.