

**Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.**  
**1 Corinthians 13: 4-8a**

Dear Cynthia, dear Jeremie, sisters and brothers,  
let me start by telling a little story.

**“Two people had a dream. In the dream, they entered a shop. Behind the counter was an angel. They asked the angel: What is it that you sell in this shop?**

**And the angel replied warmly: Everything you wish!**

**Then the two said: Well, then we would like to have happiness and harmony for our marriage, good health and long life, time for our children, wisdom for our parenting, a love that never grows cold, a healthy environment, peace on earth, and...**

**At this point the angel interrupted them and said: I'm sorry, I think there's been a misunderstanding: We don't sell the fruits, we only sell the seed!”**

That is my little story for us.

Its message is clear: relationships between people, a successful family life, a happy marriage, healthy children, supporting friends, a peaceful and lively church community cannot be bought in a shop as a kind of instant package. Love and mutual understanding, living together, caring for a child or a family together, working and worshipping together, constantly rediscovering the other person, are things that don't fall from the trees like ripe fruit.

In this story of the dream, the people in the shop can only buy the seed. Then the seed needs to be planted in the earth, tended and watered; a lot of effort is needed, much care, much work and much attention. There is quite a bit to do before you can harvest ripe fruit!

The Bible text which you chose for the baptism today, Cynthia, has some similarity to this story of the dream. Your text paints an impressive picture of a love that is patient and kind, that bears all things, resists evil and never ends... One could almost be tempted to wonder whether this isn't asking a bit much?! It's definitely a suitable text for today and for this celebration, but tell me, what has it got to do with everyday life? With fears and worries, misunderstandings, screaming babies, changing nappies, making sure the kids are fed, cared for, well dressed, go to the right schools, are successful there, find a path in life which suits them and is acceptable for us...

Aren't these ideas about love – thinking of raising our children, or living family life, or even going to church together - like a dress that is beautiful, but 5 sizes too big?

The text from 1 Corinthians is like a dream. A dream promising that everything is possible... that for love (or with love) everything is possible!

And then you take this dream into everyday life and you realise - painfully - that there must have been a misunderstanding.

Things are not lovely all the time, most things are not nice and easy...

And we discover how we are constantly dreaming of fruits, but over and over again we find ourselves in the position of sowing seeds, working hard, and

## Love is patient - sermon for Gaston's baptism

sometimes starting again from the beginning...with my husband, with my child, with my best friend, my sister, my colleague. I bet we all know that, don't we. We know the disappointment when we think that we have got somewhere with our education or our efforts in other relationships, and then out of the blue we realize that most of it hasn't lasted, and we just lead the same discussions again, discuss the same rules again, explain the same situation again or the understanding of a word or a phrase or the misunderstanding of an action...

Maybe such disappointments are an important experience. Besides being painful they can even bring liberation! Our text today is, if I understand it right, a great promise and a huge relief at the same time.

According to God's invitation for us in this passage from the letter to the Corinthians, if we love each other, then everything is possible. If we love one another, the patience we need will grow.

Love has lots of time and lots of staying power.

Love can wait...

If we love one another, we will experience grace, we will be able to live with differences and opposites without getting bitter. We will be at peace discovering that differences are part of our lives, part of our personalities. And when we love, we can live with them all! ...even see them as something that makes us rich...

I mean, just look around in this church...

It doesn't always come easily to love each other at first sight... We are very different! Sure! But honestly, aren't we also very rich, because we have each other, we know each other, we live and grow with each other?

I wouldn't want to miss seeing one of you here today. Honestly.

Another thought that came to me through the text, a thought that really helps me to see my partner, look at my boys and many other people and simply accept and try to love them just the way they are, is: when we love, we can gradually develop our ability *not* to be irritable; *not* to be resentful.

Love doesn't calculate how much we might owe to each other... how much we might have to pay back to each other.

And the greatest of all promises surely is:

love believes all things, love hopes all things, love endures all things!

That doesn't by any means say that one's got to be a bit naïve or blind or dumb.

No. It means: believe that everything is possible. The colic of the baby will stop one day, the poor health of your second born will eventually stabilise, your marriage can be more fun again, and your teenage child will surely get safely through this awkward phase, too – as many others before him or her have done... and after the row with your best friend, there will be a way of finding each other again!

Just believe that things are possible.

When you love, you imagine far beyond the normal or realistic.

When you love, you hope far beyond the imaginable or everyday.

When you love, you expect to keep on discovering new sides to life.

When you love, you expect to walk new paths again and again.

## Love is patient - sermon for Gaston's baptism

When the text says that love endures all, it doesn't mean that those who love necessarily have to suffer... or be victims. Or shut up and hide our feelings, hurts or questions. No. It simply promises that when we love, we will be able to keep going, to stick together, to get through things, to withstand.

Love always remains. Love doesn't run away.

When you love, you are able to stand up for yourself and sometimes to stand against your own self, in favour of the love and life which you share with the people around!

Love comes from God, and if you believe in love, you can expect much more than what is usually realistic or possible!

Love comes from God – you don't have to produce it, but simply receive it. You don't have to guarantee it, but simply be open to it...I simply have to open my hands, my heart, and remember that I don't have to make it... Love is given to me, just like that. And I am invited to at least try to love others as unconditionally as God loves me.

And that changes a whole lot in my life, I can tell you...

**“Love believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.  
Love never ends.”**

This text is the great promise of love for you.

You don't buy the fruits but instead the seed.

And if you remain in love, if you work for love, if you care for it and expect much from it, if you allow it time and space, then it will always grow.

If you water and nourish it with your play and your dance, with your joy and your laughter, with your happiness and your freedom, with your pain and your tears, then it will blossom and bear fruit. Then it will fill your world and the world of those around you, and today of course especially the world of Cynthia, Jeremie and little Gaston, with the most delightful, scented blossom of life.

If we remember the story of the dream at the beginning of this sermon, and if we recall the sentence “we don't sell the fruits...” we may take it as an important motto for our lives and our futures – be it as a small young family, be it as a large family with children of all ages, be it as a couple, be it as friends or as brothers and sisters in this church.

Love doesn't come in packages – ready and pre-prepared. But it is the seed for a life lived in joy and happiness and mutual understanding, if we never give up working on it, and if we always let God work on it and within it. Because: God is love. And whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him (1 John 4:16).

May this thought be an inspiration for all our lives, may it let love grow among us, and may it open our eyes in love to the needs of those around us.

Amen.