WHAT IS LOVE?

KAI: Hey, Libby.

LIBBY: No.

KAI: What, but…

LIBBY: Just-

KAI: But, but …

LIBBY: No.

CATHOLIC CENTRAL OPENING TITLES

LIBBY: Hi. I'm Libby.

KAI: I'm Kai. Welcome to Catholic Central.

LIBBY: Oh, love. The most magical and many-splendored, highly addictive battlefield there is.

KAI: Millions of words have been written about it, at least several thousand of which were later are torn up and thrown into the fire in fits of sadness, anger, and regret.

LIBBY: What do Catholics believe about it? Can the church's teachings help you be a better lover?

KAI: By that you just mean a person who loves, right?

LIBBY: I guess we'll find out.

KAI: Okay, so first of all, let's talk definitions. The word love gets thrown around a lot.

LIBBY: It's just as valid to say “I love my mom” as it is to say “I love my pet iguana, Gary,” or “I love 90s boy bands” – things that, unfortunately, are totally unrelated.

KAI: For Catholics, love has even more meanings. After many mentions in the Bible of love between God and humans, and between humans and humans, Jesus says that there is no greater love than to lay down your life for one's friends.

LIBBY: Then He does not mince His words when He says, "Love your enemies," in Matthew 5:44.

KAI: A curve ball in 1st John 4 tells us that God is love.

LIBBY: What is love, the noun, and how are we supposed to love, the verb? To help make sense of it, Catholics refer to the four Greek words used in the Bible for love.

KAI: *Storge, philia, eros, agape*. Each of these words helps us to understand what kind of love we're talking about and how to love better.

LIBBY: The first, there's *storge* love. This is the affectionate love between family members.

KAI: It's the love between parents and their children, between families and their pets, or between siblings when they aren't borrowing your Luke Skywalker action figure and breaking it, Josiah.

LIBBY: The second type of love is *philia*, the Greek word for friendship.

KAI: I have 1,433 demonstrations of *philia*, according to Facebook.

LIBBY: I think the easiest way to remember this one is by thinking of Philadelphia, a k a, the city of brotherly love.

KAI: It's probably best not to associate it with the kind of love you see at Eagles games.

LIBBY: Philia is characterized by tender, heartfelt consideration, affection, and kinship between people. It's different from *storge* that you choose whom to give *philia* to. Then there's *eros*.

KAI: Oh, you mean like ...

FABIANO KAI:

"Hey, girl."

LIBBY: Uh, sure. Eros is the passionate kind of love, the spark of attraction that drives us wild with desire, and is the root of the word erotic.

KAI: It's a very powerful force for humans, inspiring us to make both wonderful and horrible decisions. You can plan it or will it, and it's more like something that imposes itself on us.

LIBBY: It might surprise you that Catholics don't see erotic love as dirty or sinful, but rather something holy and good.

KAI: It does, however, need to be directed and purified.

LIBBY: All of the loves we've talked about can be selfish and destructive without the highest form of love, *agape*. *Agape* is a selfless, sacrificial love.

KAI: *Agape* wills the good of the other. That means that someone uses their free will to act in the best interest of others. This kind of love transcends emotions. It isn't something you earn and does not demand reciprocity. It's the word we use for God's love for us, which is unconditional. There's no keeping score.

LIBBY: You can think of the four loves like the stages in a person's life. Let's be honest. Babies are the most selfish humans out there. It's always all about them. They love their parents because that's where food comes from.

KAI: The real problem is when they stay that way. But, ideally, as they get older, they make friends with people they like and then start to like-like some of them.

LIBBY: While all of the relationships we've talked about can be called love, they can also still be all about what we want and need. *Agape* clues us into how we should actually go about loving others. If you want fullness with any type of love, eventually you have to progress to a more mature, self-sacrificial version of it.

KAI: Catholics believe that we humans get a little help in this area from God. He gives us grace that helps us go beyond ourselves.

LIBBY: That's why Christ can command us to love our neighbors and enemies, because we pass onto others what we have gotten from God, which is being loved and forgiven without ever having to earn it.

KAI: Right, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

LIBBY: For Jesus, that means, well, everyone. Up until His time, neighbors had meant the people that lived close to you. But Jesus teaches that our neighbors are all the people that need our help, no matter where they live.

KAI: That means I should book the next flight to any third world country.

LIBBY: Well, if you want to, great, but really, your neighbor is anyone in your life that you can help.

KAI: That's true. Acts of love can be small-scale things that we can do right here, right now. Jesus gives us lots of examples, such as feeding the hungry, comforting the sick, or visiting those in prison. We can infuse selfless *agape* love into all of our interactions with others.

LIBBY: Yes, even our enemies, but that doesn't necessarily mean our arch-nemesis, although we should try to love and pray for her, too.

KAI: Wait, you have an arch-nemesis?

LIBBY: Do I. It can be anyone in our lives we're having trouble forgiving, even ourselves.

KAI: To get back to original question, "What is love," there are four kinds of love: *storge, philia, eros*, and *agape*. The first three are transformed when *agape* lifts them beyond themselves.

LIBBY: These kinds of love can overlap. Together they form the basis of what you might say is the meaning and purpose of all of our lives.

KAI: Catholics especially are challenged to exhibit selfless, sacrificial love, big or small. You know what, Libby? As my co-host and friend, I *philia* and *agape* you.

LIBBY: Not sure it works that way, but right back at you.

 For Catholic Central, I'm Libby.

KAI: I'm Kai. Until next time, *agape i*t forward.

CATHOLIC CENTRAL CLOSING CREDITS

LIBBY: Nope.

KAI: But-

LIBBY: No. Just go.

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