I was pastor of a parish in Saginaw for a number of years. During that time, I became close to a couple whose names were Floyd and Edna. They have been married for more the 60 years. Nobody ever calls Floyd by that name. Everybody calls him Rocky.

You may remember that in last week’s Gospel story, Jesus gave Simon, son of John, a new name – PETER. We know him now as St. Peter, the first pope. The name Peter is the English translation for a Greek word meaning ROCK.

So you could say that Jesus gave Simon the same nickname as my friend, Rocky. There’s something, strong and sturdy and solid about that name.

I’ll get back to Edna and Rocky shortly.

In this week’s Gospel, Jesus gave Simon still another name. He named him SATAN, which literally means ADVERSARY. So, Simon goes from being strong, solid, sturdy to being the adversary, the opponent of Jesus.

I think Peter, the Rock, is so much like the rest of us. We’re surprised by, horrified at, the thought of this good person suffering. “God forbid that any such terrible thing should happen to you.”

I don’t know about you, but for me, something like this lies under that surprise: horror. “If this good person has to face suffering and I’m a good person gosh, maybe I’m in for some suffering, too.”

Now, that’s not all of it, but if I’m honest, that’s some of it. So I’m right there with Peter saying, “God forbid that any such thing should ever happen to you … or to me!!!

Jesus is reminding Peter, all the rest of them, and us about one of life’s tough realities.
Real love often involves pain and sometimes lots of it.

I think of a young couple who are overjoyed
   at the birth of their first child.
They love that child more than they love themselves.
And then comes the poop diaries
   and sleepless nights walking a screaming infant.
And there’s work to face at 6 the next morning.
Sometimes love can be a royal pain.

That brings me back to Edna and Rocky.
They raised two sons and two daughters.
One of their sons, Kevin, turned out to be a brilliant student,
   a charming person . . . and a severe alcoholic.
Kevin was in an out of just about every decent alcohol rehab program in
the Midwest.

And Edna and Rocky never gave up on Kevin.
Edna once said to me that she thought
God had brought Kevin into their lives to teach them
the real meaning of unconditional love.
And it wasn’t some mushy kind of love. It was tough love.
I sat in on what’s called a “family intervention » with Kevin once.

Well, a few short years ago Kevin took his life.

I had left Saginaw sometime before that,
   but I saw Rocky and Edna a couple days after Kevin’s funeral.
Edna said that she woke up the morning of the funeral thinking,
   “God, how am I ever going to get through this day?”

But she said Kevin’s funeral turned out to be a day of pure joy.
People coming out of the woodwork to tell what Kevin had meant for them.

Now, it doesn’t end there.
As I was leaving them, Edna said, “I think the bubble is beginning to burst.”
You can’t have loved as deeply as they loved Kevin
   and not feel the pain, the heartache.

Jesus says to Peter and all the rest of us today:
“If you’re going to follow me, then it’s love that has to drive your life.”
Not the kind of love you just talk about, the kind of love you live
to the very last breath, like Jesus did.

I can’t help but think of the pictures we all saw this week
of the very messy, untidy, cumbersome dirty work of rescuing people
from flooded homes in Texas and Louisiana – Hurricane Harvey.

Jesus invites us to this love feast today.
Just know that when you say your “Amen” at Communion time
that you are saying “yes” to this Jesus’ love
If you get involved in this love feast,
there’ll be some heartache and pain down the road.

Jesus is our reminder that the heartache and pain are not the last word.
What lies beyond the heartache and pain
for those who truly love . . . is the promise of Resurrection.
That’s what we come here to remember at Eucharist.