

21 May 2017 (6th Sunday of Easter, Year A)

Acts 8:5-8,14-17; Psalm 65(66):1-7,16,20; 1 Peter 3:15-18; John 14:15-21.

If you love me you will keep my commandments.

Am I committed to my faith? Faith is an invitation to a deep personal relationship with God. In last week's gospel Jesus invited us to abide in him, take up our dwelling in him. We are invited to love God because he has loved us first.

Love begets love! When we are loved we are encouraged to love in turn. God loved us in creation; he loved us on the cross; he loved us when he invited us into his new life through Baptism. God is love itself. Jesus tells us that in order to show God that we love him in return, we need to obey his commandments: love one another as I have loved you!

Love is the being of God and it is the beginning and end of humanity and of every Christian. In order to show that we have the love of God within us, we need to reach out and love those around us just as Jesus himself did. God created us out of love and sent his only Son to be born in our midst because of his love for us. Because of this great love, Jesus came to talk to us about the Father, who is love itself. To be in God is to be in love.

Jesus showed us that love is not just as simple four-lettered word that we throw around whenever we feel like it! Jesus had to die on the cross to show us the extent of his love. We are not being asked to die on the cross in order to show our love for our sisters and brothers, but we do need to die within ourselves so that we can love. Often we have plans and desires we would like to achieve, but these plans might be in the way of our relationships with people around us. In order to love our sisters and brothers, we might need to die for our own plans and listen to what those around us have to say. At other times we might need to die to our prejudices in order to reach out to a person in need. This is real death within us that becomes an expression of love.

Jesus knows that it is not easy for us to love always and we need help to achieve this. He therefore promises us another paraclete that will come to assist us. A paraclete is someone who stands besides you in front of a tribunal, someone who is able to provide us with a character witness, someone who stands up to defend us. By his presence here on earth Jesus was our original paraclete; he came to intercede for us in front of the Father. Now that Jesus has returned to the Father, Jesus promises us another paraclete that will continue his work. This 'other' paraclete is the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit who stands besides us to help us forward.

The Holy Spirit is the very Spirit of God and is a Spirit of Love, he supports us continues to inspire us to love our sisters and brothers around us. He helps us when it becomes difficult to die for our sisters and brothers. We are not alone in this mission that Jesus has given us to obey his commandments. When we find it difficult to love we need to turn to the Spirit of God within us and let him love those around us through us.

Love of God, that expresses itself in the love of our sisters and brothers, is the basis of our faithful relationship to God.

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