

6<sup>th</sup> May 2018 (6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, Year B)

Acts 10:25-26,34-35,44-48; Psalm 97(98):1-4; 1 John 4:7-10; John 15: 9-17.

### **Remain in my love!**

In last week's gospel Jesus used the image of the vine and the branches to explain to his followers the need to remain connected to him. Only by remaining immersed in the Son can we produce fruit and be disciples of Jesus.

How does one remain connected to Jesus? What does this mean and look like? In today's gospel reading Jesus explains that our connection with him is love; indeed he treats us as friends! In the gospels written by Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus speaks about the love of God and the love of neighbour as being two sides of the same commandment. In the gospel according to John, Jesus tells his disciples that the mark of the true follower is to love his neighbour.

Jesus reminds us that we have been chosen to participate in the love of God the Father. We are asked to share this totally free gift of love that we receive, with those around us. We become the givers of God's infinite love to the world; our love reminds those around us, of God's love for them. The fruit that we produce is this divine love that we share.

How do we love one another? John uses the word '*agape*' to describe this love. *Agape* refers to love that is always ready to give of itself at all costs, and does not look at what the returns are. *Agape* is the love of God; love for its own sake.

In today's gospel reading Jesus explains to his disciples what *agape* means. He tells them to love one another in the same way as he loved them. Two Sundays ago we reflected about the good shepherd, ready to risk his life to defend the sheep in his care against a thief or a wolf; this is dangerous stuff! The good shepherd is ready to lay down his life for his sheep.

On Holy Thursday we observed Jesus as he took off his clothes and, dressed like a slave, lowered himself in front of each of his disciples to wash their dirty feet, something not even slaves are obliged to do to their masters! Jesus also told his disciples to do the same to one another!

On Good Friday we saw Jesus, the Lamb of God, give up his life in sacrifice on the cross. He indeed laid down his life in order to save the sheep under his care from their sins!

Jesus tells us that by being ready to love our sisters and brothers until the end, we give witness to the fact that we are his disciples. This type of love is not easy to attain and I am sure that we often realise that we have failed. Although we have every good intention to be of service to our sisters and brothers, we often do not go all the way.

In his last exhortation letter Pope Francis tells us that we do not need to worry about this, we are on a journey to holiness and we only arrive when we die and meet God face to face. The objective is not in being successful, but in remaining faithful to our goal. When we realise that we have failed, we are encouraged to start again and love again.

This is the fruitful life that Jesus expects of us, his disciples, to love one another as he himself loves us!

Fr Mario