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Friday's Gospel: Friends with Everyone

Gospel for Friday in the 5th
Week of Lent, and commentary.

Gospel (*Jn* 15:12-17)

Jesus said to his disciples:

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends,

for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. This I command you, to love one another."

Commentary

In his first encyclical, Benedict XVI asked: "Can love be commanded?"^[1] Many people today view love as simply a human feeling, perhaps the noblest, but ultimately subject to all the vagaries of the human heart. But it is God's love for us that comes first: "In the love-story recounted by the Bible, he comes towards us. He seeks to win our hearts, all the way to the Last Supper, to the piercing of his

heart on the Cross, to his appearances after the Resurrection and to the great deeds by which, through the activity of the Apostles, he guided the nascent Church along its path.”^[2] Truly, Jesus manifested himself as our best friend. He embodied the prophet’s oracle: “I have loved you with an everlasting love” (*Jer* 31:3).

In Jesus, love is not fragile or ephemeral. It is eternal, stronger than death (cf. *Song* 8:6). The friendship that He has shown us, while being God’s uncreated Love, is also human. It is an example that, with God’s grace, can spur us to give our lives for others, in many small details each day: listening, serving, advising, forgiving, caring for, etc. First of all, with our brethren in the faith (cf. *Gal* 6:10). But also with everyone (cf. *Ibid.*), because, if we have Christ’s love in our heart, everyone can become our friend –

not just those with whom we find it easy to get along, with, but also those who think differently, or fail to act in accord with our expectations. When Judas handed our Lord over with a kiss, Jesus responded: “Friend, do what you have come to do” (cf. *Mt* 26:50).

Love belongs to God. We could say that He has the “patent.” “The only real love is God’s Love,” Saint Josemaría wrote.^[3] A disciple of Christ, chosen by God with a divine vocation, has a beautiful burden: to allow our heart to be transformed to the measure of Christ’s Heart, learning to love others and producing the savory and lasting fruits of God’s Love in others.

^[1] Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, no. 16.

^[2] *Ibid.*, no. 17.

^[3] *The Way*, no. 417.

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