

Commentary on the Gospel: As He Has Loved Us

Gospel for the 6th Sunday of Easter (Cycle B), and commentary.

Gospel (*Jn 15:9-17*)

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

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

At the Last Supper, Jesus goes more deeply into his teaching on the

nature of love, often connected to life and joy. The passage from today's Mass is preceded by that of the vine and the branches: when united to the vine, the branches receive life and the capacity to yield fruit. The one who cares for the branches and prunes them is the Father. In Christ, the branches are united to the Father and receive life from the Father. To be united to the vine is to be united to Christ, to remain in him. And to remain in him means to remain in his words: to listen to them actively and assimilate them in our own lives. From here will come abundant fruit, source of joy for the Father, for the Son, and for all those united to Christ. And in this process the Father will be glorified, seen by the world as love and life.

How do we remain united to Christ? Through faith and love. And what leads us to love? The love we have received. A person who has not been

loved doesn't know what love is, even if they have the capacity to love inside, since it is only awakened by the experience of love received. Love which is directed "to me." In Jesus we see what God's love is like in a personal way. When we pray "in Christ," we experience his extraordinary personal love, directed to each and every person, and specifically "to me." We experience his loving look. Saint Paul said: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (*Gal 2:20*).

Christ's love brings with it knowledge, since it opens our heart to the realization that only in him do we unite ourselves to the source of life, who is the Father. Christ, the Son, abides in the Father's love because of his complete self-giving and acceptance, the identification of

his own will with the Father's. In Christ we see that identifying oneself with the will of the Father – loving the Father—is not something foreign to us, but rather the path to truly be ourselves, to achieve our personal fulfillment. Jesus' words in today's Gospel tell us that the commandments of the Father are not something foreign to us, something that come from outside, but rather our "spiritual DNA" as it were. They remind us of who we are, what we are made for, what we aspire to.

The core of our "spiritual DNA" is the commandment to love one another, but with a love whose measure we can only grasp by looking at Christ. Nowadays, the word "love" is used with many different meanings, and its true meaning has been distorted. The love we have known and experienced in Christ is love as a gift, love as self-giving and service. Jesus has looked upon us as the Father

looks upon us, and loved us as the Father loves us. He has called us friends. Would that we too had the eagerness to look upon those around us in the same way, to understand ever better what friendship really means. Jesus wants to share with us what he shares with the Father. He opens his heart to us in order to pour his grace into ours. Like the Father, he has looked at us with love before we looked at him. His is a love that “precedes us.” It is the love that first entered our heart at baptism.

What does it mean to say that Christ has chosen us? It means that he has drawn close to us when we were distant. It means that he has come to heal our heart and open up what was closed. We were like a seed incapable of opening itself, incapable of dying in order to give way to the shoot that will never cease growing and strengthening, with a life that will always remain. Only in Christ can we

learn what it means to love and to love one another, because in him we have received a light that has illumined us and opened us to others. All Christians are called to be ambassadors of that first love, of Christ's love, for those around them, establishing God's Kingdom in their hearts.

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