



LIVING THE GOSPEL

**6th Sunday of Easter
May 5, 2024**

Theme: "12This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

Gathering Prayer

All: Grant, almighty God, that we may celebrate with heartfelt devotion these days of joy, which we keep in honor of the risen Lord, and that what we relive in remembrance we may always hold to in what we do. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: John 15:9-17

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ This I command you, to love one another.

Gospel Focus

This gospel is full of lovely and memorable lines that call our attention to them. Jesus affirms here what he has elsewhere revealed as the greatest commandment: love. God has loved his Son so he can love us, and we are likewise called to love because we are loved. We are so loved that Jesus gave his life for us. We are so loved that Jesus relinquishes his role as master that leaves us as slaves. He yet again tips the power scales that the secular world so treasures. We are rather his friends, elevated to a sharing in his life and his relationship with God the Father. Jesus shares everything he has with us, his love, his healing, his life are all now ours.

Gospel Reflection

Today's readings speaks of how God befriends humanity and shows no partiality.

In the verses previous to today's reading from Acts. Peter struggles with this new insight. Three times God speaks to him in a vision, so that he is able to say to Cornelius. "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality." Even as Peter is speaking and still trying to grasp the implications of this, the Holy Spirit preempts any further attempts at explanation, and in the divine erratic, inexplicable way, falls upon all without distinction. As Peter rightly asserts, those who consider themselves already to be God's best friends must not put obstacles in the way of others upon whom the Spirit falls. Like a parent who loves each child differently yet equally, so is the divine embrace.

John's Gospel uses the term disciple more than seventy times to refer to all the women and men who believed in and follow Jesus. John includes no scene of choosing or sending the Twelve, nor do the Twelve figure in any prominent way in the narrative. They are mentioned only in passing at Jn 6:67, 70; Jn 20:24.

In today's gospel reading, Jesus speaks of having chosen and befriended all who have remained with him. The offer of friendship to disciples is part of a chain of love that begins with the Father, whose love is poured out in the self-gift that is Jesus, who offers friendship to all. Jesus then tells his friends how to keep that chain unbroken: pay the love forward to others, befriending them in the way that he has done for them. He speaks of this as a "commandment," which seems an odd term in this context. How can one be commanded to "love" another person? In biblical parlance, "love" signifies not so much the feelings one has toward another. Rather, it designates deeds of loving kindness toward another that communicate to that one that they are a part of the community of chosen friends of God and Jesus. We are commanded to act this way toward others, no matter how we might feel about them and whether or not they reciprocate the love offered.

Jesus demonstrated what such love entails when he washed the feet of all "his own" (13:1), the many beloved friends gathered for their final meal with him. He did not skip Peter and Judas. He explains this as the greatest kind of love: the willingness to lay down one's life for one's friends. This is not an obligatory service, such as a slave is bound to render. Rather, the love of friendship is freely chosen self-surrender. The most challenging aspect of this kind of love is that the friends of Jesus are asked not only to embrace within the community of beloved disciples all those whom Jesus befriends, especially those to whom we are not naturally drawn, but even to be willing to risk our own lives for such people. When this seems a humanly impossible choice, Jesus assures disciples that when they ask God in his name, the necessary grace will be given.

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading — Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

²⁵ When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.

²⁶ But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man." ...

³⁴ And Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ...

⁴⁴ While Peter was still saying this, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. ⁴⁵ And the believers from among the circumcised who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, ⁴⁷ "Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" ⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

Responsorial Psalm — Ps 98:1, 2-3, 3-4

(R): *The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.*

Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done wondrous deeds; his right hand has won victory for him, his holy arm. **(R)**

The Lord has made his salvation known: in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice. He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness toward the house of Israel. **(R)**

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation by our God. Sing joyfully to the Lord, all you lands; break into song; sing praise. **(R)**

Second Reading — 1 John 4:7-10

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins.

Catechism of The Catholic Church

142. *By his Revelation*, "the invisible God, from the fullness of his love, addresses men as his friends, and moves among them, in order to invite and receive them into his own company."(DV 2; cf. Col 1:15; I Tim 1:17; Ex 33:11; Jn 15:14-15; Bar 3:38 (Vulg.)) The adequate response to this invitation is faith.

609. By embracing in his human heart the Father's love for men, Jesus "loved them to the end", for "greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."(Jn 13:1; 15:13) In suffering and death his humanity became the free and perfect instrument of his divine love which desires the salvation of men.(Cf. Heb 2:10,17-18; 4:15; 5:7-9) Indeed, out of love for his Father and for men, whom the Father wants to save, Jesus freely accepted his Passion and death: "No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord."(Jn 10:18) Hence the sovereign freedom of God's Son as he went out to his death.(Cf. Jn 18:4-6; Mt 26:53)

737. The mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit is brought to completion in the Church, which is the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. This joint mission henceforth brings Christ's faithful to share in his communion with the Father in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit *prepares* men and goes out to them with his grace, in order to draw them to Christ. The Spirit *manifests* the risen Lord to them, recalls his word to them and opens their minds to the understanding of his Death and Resurrection. He *makes present* the mystery of Christ, supremely in the Eucharist, in order to reconcile them, to *bring them into communion* with God, that they may "bear much fruit."(Jn 15:8,16)

1824. Fruit of the Spirit and fullness of the Law, charity keeps the *commandments* of God and his Christ: "Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love."(Jn 15:9-10; cf. Mt 22:40; Rom 13:8-10)

1972. The New Law is called a *law of love* because it makes us act out of the love infused by the Holy Spirit, rather than from fear; a *law of grace*, because it confers the strength of grace to act, by means of faith and the sacraments; a *law of freedom*, because it sets us free from the ritual and juridical observances of the Old Law, inclines us to act spontaneously by the prompting of charity and, finally, lets us pass from the condition of a servant who "does not know what his master is doing" to that of a friend of Christ - "For all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you" - or even to the status of son and heir.(Jn 15:15; cf. Jas 1:25; 2:12; Gal 4:1-7.21-31; Rom 8:15)

2745. Prayer and *Christian life* are *inseparable*, for they concern the same love and the same renunciation, proceeding from love; the same filial and loving conformity with the Father's plan of love; the same transforming union in the Holy Spirit who conforms us more and more to Christ Jesus; the same love for all men, the love with which Jesus has loved us. "Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he [will] give it to you. This I command you, to love one another."(Jn 15:16-17)

He "prays without ceasing" who unites prayer to works and good works to prayer. Only in this way can we consider as realizable the principle of praying without ceasing.(Origen, De orat. 12: PG 11, 452c)

Sharing and Discussion

1. What is the significance of Jesus' moving the disciples from the position of servant to one of friend? How are these relationships, servant and friend, different?
2. To what degree do you believe that you, a member of Christ's Church, have been "chosen" to "go" and to "bear fruit"?
3. What is the most difficult aspect of loving others for you? What is the most enjoyable aspect?

Closing Prayer

All: Loving God, you put forth the greatest commandment: love one another as I love you. Receive our prayers that our hearts might expand and love for the world might deepen. We ask this through Christ our risen Lord. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen