

Connecting with the Sunday Readings

Fifth Sunday of Easter Gospel Word

John 13:31–33a,
34–35

“Love one another.” The message of today’s Gospel reading is short and to the point. It could not be clearer or briefer. It is simple, but not easy! To the extent that we take Jesus’ command seriously in our daily life, it could not be more challenging. Jesus gives a very clear model of what this means “as I have loved you” (v. 34). A short time after he spoke these words, Jesus gave the supreme example of loving others when he gave his own life for us. In a way the litmus test of faith found throughout John’s Gospel is how we love and care for others. As Jesus says, by this “everyone will know that you are my disciples” (v. 35). In John’s Gospel, loving Christ and keeping this command are one and the same. Life as a disciple of Christ is about Jesus’ one, new *simple* commandment: Love one another.

Living the Word

Jesus’ new commandment in today’s Gospel reading is simple but very challenging! The ones close to us are first on the list of “others.” The ones we know so well. We know their good points and their faults and mistakes. We have expectations of them that are not always met. Sometimes resentments and impatience block our loving spirit. It could be a family member, a co-worker, or a friend. Given the choice, we sometimes do not feel very loving. Maybe, our feelings are more like tolerance or endurance. It is important to remember that the love Jesus is talking about is not a feeling. It is a decision to care and it is shown in action, no matter what we feel.

At times it’s good to return to the basics of our lives. And it’s helpful to keep them brief so that we can focus on them. Today’s Gospel is short, but contains a good summary of the basics of our faith. It’s not a list of one hundred things you need to know to be a good Christian. It’s boiled down to one thing: “Love one another as I have loved you.” That’s a good sentence to put on the wall or on a parish sign as a reminder of what’s really important.

This week make an inventory of how loving your relationships are. Recall that love has thousands of expressions. Saint Thomas Aquinas says that love means willing good for another. It also involves serving that good. It doesn’t have to be something major; often a simple gesture of love can go a long way. A lot of love can be contained in a simple “good morning” to a sullen co-worker or to a distressed spouse. And remember to include yourself as someone to love. In loving each other, we give great glory to God, from whom all love comes.

One-line Prayer

Lord, teach us to love as you did.
Amen.