

EASTER 6 – 2021
Acts 10:25-26;34-35;44-48.
1 Jn 4:7-10
Jn 15:9-17

In the 1960's the Beatles told us that all we need is love. In the 2020's feelings alone seem to determine secular human behaviour and we are assured that Love is Love which is the foundation of human moral activity. Love is never defined in these mantras because in English this one word covers whatever the individual wants it to cover. In Greek there are 4 separate words for differing types of human loving experience. They are Affection (*storge*); Friendship (*filia*), Romantic Love (*eros*) and Charity (*agape*).

The thread of today's readings is to highlight a Christian disciple's chief aim namely to understand the love (charity) that God has for us and his desire that we might respond positively to it. St John's first epistle reminds us that God's love has been made available and accessible in and through Jesus, to those courageous enough to approach him.

The gospel reading is another part of Jesus' teaching during the Last Supper in which he speaks of the mutual love that he and the Father share and how much he loves his disciples. Jesus urges them to love each other in this same way, that is unconditionally. He leads them to understand the Father's plan for our salvation so they become his friends. His friends *choose* to obey his commands. Slaves or servants are those who *must* obey their lord's will without question or explanation. "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12). If they choose to obey this command, the disciples will be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit which will flow through them.

This is the pattern Jesus sets for the faithful. To love one another in the way that Jesus loves us means that we must stop trying to control and manipulate one another. We are to give our true selves to others and stop playing games with them. Give God *to* each other and receive God *from* each other. We must raise each other up to new heights and a new level of living - to more than they can be through their own efforts. Easy to say, but difficult to do.

There is an upside to the life of discipleship. Jesus tells his disciples that we did not choose him but he chose us. We may have thought that we were 'trying to find God,' but what we were doing was responding to his prompting and leading. We come to love God because he loves us first. He always takes the initiative.

Affection covers an array of loves. In modern, as opposed to ancient culture, friendship is a love that is dismissed. Romantic love, or the sexual element of it, is centre stage in the secular mores and when the passion subsides, it is often assumed that love has died. Charity (*agape*) is the unconditional love of the Father given to us through the Son. This love is our ultimate goal. Affection, friendship and romantic love are training grounds for Charity to grow. Yet Charity is a rival to the other loves because the other loves end when our earthly life ends. The love that endures through suffering, trial and tribulation is the love of God. This love is redemptive. If we think this love is not worth the cost, then we are more pagan than Christian.

God loves us because he has made us in his image, and that image is our ability to love him in return and love others in the way that he loves us. This command doesn't mean we have to be nice to everyone. Nor does it mean that we have to like everyone. It means we have to love everyone to salvation. This love means that we must pray for others and lovingly invite them to 'come and see' Jesus for themselves. What greater act of love is there than this giving of ourselves to God and others? St Peter and St Paul and countless others have had to learn that God's love is not limited by human boundaries and prejudices. God's love is a reckless redemptive love, but it is the only love that bears a harvest for eternal unity with himself.

Love one another as Jesus loves us.

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