Loving One Another: Tough Work!

In this week's Gospel, as we get closer to the solemnity of the Ascension, we hear Jesus giving some farewell words to the apostles, and this week He has the powerful line of the new commandment He has given, to love one another as I have loved you.

Love though as we know is hard work. Sometimes people are hard to love. And, love requires sacrifice. So how can we have a proper theology of love and live it out in different ways?

For one, I think we can follow the Trinity and remember love is a giving and a receiving. The Father, Son and Spirit are in perfect unity and the love flows between them. In our friendships and relationships, it's important that this component is healthy. It's also important we ask ourselves are we being loved as we should be from others, but also are we doing what we should to make our loved ones and friends better through our acts of love and mercy.

Second, we remember what Saint Therese of Lisieux taught us: doing simple things with great love. Last week was Mother's Day, and think of all those things moms do: getting up in the middle of the night when we have no memory of that, helping us learn how to tie our shoes, to pray, to sound out the words to read, and making us meals and going to our events; its a long list. So let's never forget to learn from that, remembering that simple things we do for one another make such a profound difference in making the world a better place.

Third, maybe we can think about the things we don't do and avoid. Like I said, some people are hard to love. And as emotional people, sometimes we can be quick to act or lash out. I'm going to sound my horn at that guy and show him! I'm going to type in something inflammatory on social media because of what she said! He gossiped about me so I'm going to make sure others at work know all about him! He's a Democrat or a Republican so I'm going to slam him! Emotions are good things, but they can cause problems. So maybe we can think about taking a deep breath, calming down, and thinking about our word choices, what we put out there on social media, or how we treat others on the road. Yes, some people do things that are hard to deal with.

Fourth, love entails challenging things too. Every parent knows they can't say yes to everything; and sometimes their kids might see them as unfair, but they are trying to help them reach their potential. The same is true for humanity. It is very hard to testify to the faith; to be lights in a world that can be quite dark. But remember, we cannot be afraid to speak out and testify to what is right and true to reach minds and hearts. It's hard, but we need to look for ways to have a true argument; not shouting and screaming but pointing out to others here is what I believe, and why I believe it; think about it. Maybe they won't engage you at first, but with a bit of effort, I truly believe hearts and minds and be converted; just look at how many people for instance are part of the pro life movement now, or now part of the Catholic Church they once attacked, because people were not afraid to engage and speak with them.

Lastly, let us strive to also see one another in the image of God. Again, this isn't easy is it? People do bad things to one another. But yet, Christ came and died for us all. Praying for our enemies, thinking about how we treat others we don't like, striving to forgive, turning the other cheek, all certainly easier said than done. But we just might help someone to come to know God when we show true mercy and compassion.

No, love isn't easy, nor is it easy to be a disciple. But it's not just a suggestion, it's a commandment. Jesus has shown us the way and give us the strength through the Eucharist and the Holy Spirit - so let us take His commandment seriously, and make it a true way of life.

God bless,

Fr. Paul