

Sixth Sunday of Easter B

“As the Father has loved Me, so I also love you.” If I could give out homework, I would have you jot down or print those words out and hang them on your refrigerator, mirror, or microwave. Make them the wallpaper on your phone or computer screen, at least for a few weeks. Let them surround your daily routines and hear Jesus say them to you: *“As the Father has loved Me, so I also love you.”* The perfect, timeless, and unchanging bond of selfless giving that is God’s own inner life – the all-powerful love that created the stars and formed your DNA and clothes the world in splendor and new life in spring – this is the love that is yours from Jesus to guide, heal, console, inspire, protect.

“As the Father has loved Me, so I also love you.” That sentence is the core of **evangelization** – living in the conviction of God’s love that invites others to know Jesus as He truly is, God’s love made visible, enfolded among us and alive in His Holy Spirit at work in our midst. It is the core of **stewardship**, where we first discover that all we have, and all we are, is a gift of God’s love. But like the chalice we use at Mass, we do not simply take this divine love into ourselves for our own benefit, as a possession to cherish and keep. It is given to us and held within us ***precisely so it can be shared with others***, a sacred gift to be poured out. This is Jesus’ new commandment – Love One Another As I Have Loved You – and the core of Christian life: that in every personal exchange and encounter, in every conversation, we would somehow convey that experience to those around us: “as the Father has loved me, so I also love you.”

That sounds deceptively simple until one really tries it, consistently, in the complexities of life, with our own weaknesses and those of the people around us. It is an infinitely high bar, so it’s understandable that at times we fail. We are not always loveable; but God’s love heals those wounds. We do not give in to discouragement, because God never fails

Love is one of the most difficult words we have, for it is so fundamental and means many different things to people. St. Paul gives the characteristics of love in I Corinthians 13, so often used at weddings, and his verses are a profound examination of conscience: am I patient? Am I kind? Do I avoid jealousy? Am I

sometimes rude, or quick-tempered, or self-centered? Do I brood over injuries, harbor suspicions, too easily dismiss people from my respect and concern? Such is something of the complexity of that simple word, love ... which, as John reminds us, is as vast as the mystery of God, Who is Love.

There are many inspiring stories of love, but you can provide you own: call to mind some specific thing that someone has done for you out of patient, faithful care. Maybe it was a parent, a sibling, a friend. Maybe a nurse or a teacher or a coach. Maybe a stranger in a moment of need. Maybe it was a word of forgiveness – given to another who has hurt us, or humbly received from someone we have hurt. Even if that person is no longer among us, in prayer take a moment to thank God for sending that messenger of love into your life, someone who has been a living witness to love in matters great or small.

“As the Father has loved Me, so I also love you.” As we approach the end of the Easter season, sit with those words this week – maybe on your screen or a Post-It note – until they bring you peace. Open your soul to receive the love of Jesus, and then choose some specific action to give it away. It will not solve the many problems of our world, but it will do something real to make it at least a little more like the Kingdom of God, Who is Love.