

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

St. John 13:31-35

G.K. Chesterton, a famous British author of the early twentieth-century and a convert from the Church of England to the Catholic Church. He once said to those who criticised the Church and Christianity for claiming a moral superiority but not solving the world's problems: "The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried."

The problem is that too often and for too long Christianity has been touted as a feel-good religion that should make no demands on us but instead simply accept whatever it is we want or what we feel. This is made worse by a false understanding of love, often fed by popular stories on television and in films and in songs that say love and good feelings are one and the same. The fact is that love doesn't always make us feel good.

There are four words in Greek for the English word "love." The first, *ερος* (*eros*), means a love of beauty. The second, *φιλια* (*filia*), means a brotherly love akin to friendship. The third, *στοργε* (*storge*), means affection akin to the love between a mother and father and their child. The fourth, *αγαπε* (*agape*), is the word for "love" used in the Gospels by Christ. It is a love defined by sacrifice. Christ showed His love for us by His sacrifice. It wasn't necessary that His love be proved by sacrifice, but rather His sacrifice was a manifestation of His love. And that love continues today in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in which Christ's love is made present in the sacrifice of His Body and Blood on the altar. When the Priest offers the gifts of bread and wine which become the Body and Blood of Christ he also offers the sacrifice of himself and the people for we are expected to sacrifice ourselves for Christ. That is the love Christ means.

St. Teresa of Calcutta—Mother Teresa—explained what Christ meant by love when she wrote:

“People are unreasonable, illogical, and self-centred.

Love them anyway.

If you do good, people may accuse you of selfish motives.

Do good anyway.

If you are successful, you may win false friends and true enemies.

Succeed anyway.

The good you do today may be forgotten tomorrow.

Do good anyway.

Honesty and transparency make you vulnerable.

Be honest and transparent anyway.

What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight.

Build anyway.

People who really want help may attack you if you help them.

Help them anyway.

Give the world the best you have and you may get hurt.

Give the world your best anyway.

Why? Because in the final analysis, all of this is between you and God... It was never between you and them anyway.”