

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

St. John 16:23-29

The command to love is one which we hear repeatedly but it is the most difficult to follow because it is the foundation for every other command.

Those who were born, lived and died before the incarnation, before the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, were the servants of God. They felt themselves to be enslaved to the law of God made known in the Law of Moses. With Christ, men and women, you and I, are no longer slaves to the Law but friends of God. The Lord says, "I do not call you servants any longer... but I have called you friends." The Lord calls us friends because we, by virtue of our baptism, are to participate in the life of God and to participate in the life of God means to share in creation, redemption and sanctification—that is, the mission of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Creation gives life, redemption heals what has been damaged, and sanctification draws us into love.

Those who abide or remain in the Lord are known by the love they bear to God and to us. We know whether or not we remain in the Lord by the love we show to others. It does not mean that we are perfect in that love. But it does mean that we know, at least, that we ought to love, and when we fail in this command that our conscience is pricked. That conscience is the voice of God, and our willingness to listen to that voice is evidence of our desire to abide in the Lord. To remain in the Lord means to love Him and one another. It means to share in the work of God which is love made known in creation, redemption and sanctification. It means being honest when we would prefer to lie, it means speaking well of the one who has hurt us, it means offering help to those we would judge and condemn.

In the face of the culture of death we must build a culture of life, and that demands sacrifice—“to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” We must never be afraid or ashamed to show love or kindness or gratitude, for it takes courage to love. It took courage to hang upon the cross.