

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

St. John 14:15-21

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” The command to love is one which we hear repeatedly but it is, I think, the most difficult to follow because it is the foundation for every other command.

If we are to love all people, but most of the time people seem to get in the way or annoy or us just make life difficult. It’s all very well to say, “love one another” but it’s another thing to live it.

If I were to love all men and women it would mean that we would have to put ourselves last all the time. It would mean that we would not lie, that we would not cheat, that we would not speak cruelly of others, that we would give to all who legitimately asked, that we wouldn’t gossip. For most of us, all that is rather difficult. We might lie to get out of an embarrassing situation, we might cheat if it means that we shall get something we wouldn’t otherwise receive, we might speak cruelly of others especially when they annoy us, we don’t give to all who legitimately ask because it means we shall have to go without, and we do gossip.

“I have given you these commands so that you may love one another.” The commands of the Lord and of His Church are given for freedom. Unfortunately it seems that the commandments of God and the rules of the Church deny freedom because they deny us what we would most like to do. But freedom is not about doing what we most like, it is about becoming who we truly are. It makes sense that the Creator knows the most about the creature. The watchmaker knows how the watch works and how to repair it. A mechanic knows how a car is put together and how to fix it. God knows who we are and what works best for us because He made us. Nobody makes something to see it fail. The glory of the creation reflects the glory of the creator. That is why the

Lord can say, “I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.”

Those who abide in the Lord are known by the love they bear to God and to others. We know whether or not we abide in the Lord by the love we show to others. It doesn't 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 abide 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 on the cross.