

## HOMILY ~ SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER MAY 4/5, 2024

If you take a second to look through the bulletin today (not right now, though, when I am preaching ...), or if you check out the Parish website, you will notice that there is a lot involved in being a Christian. There is weekly Mass, confessions to do at least once a year, laws, hierarchy, picnics, pancake breakfasts, defending human rights, standing up for the teachings of our faith and on and on and on. Ultimately, today, Jesus sums up how to do all of that, and how to be a good disciple in one short sentence – ***“Love one another as I have loved you.”*** Everything else flows from that – the picnics, the fundraisers and even those crazy church teachings. ***“Love one another as I have loved you.”***

What is this love that he is talking about? There are probably a million different songs, books and poems that give us definitions. I am going to use an illustration. **Love is like a candle.** As we have been talking here, it has been slowly burning away, melting, dripping and shrinking. The candle is slowly consumed by the flame until, eventually, it will be nothing but a stubble to be thrown out into the trash. The candle slowly gives of itself, slowly dies away, in order to provide light and warmth to those huddled around it. Oddly, that is a beautiful image of what love is. **We are called to give of ourselves, we are called to die to ourselves, in order to provide the warmth of love to others.**

In other words, ***“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”*** Authentic love is a gift of self. We find it when we put ourselves at the service of others, when we live to **give** and not to **take**, when we are willing to **suffer**, so that someone else can **rejoice**. That is what Jesus teaches us, not just as a suggestion, or a nice way of life, but as a commandment – in fact, it is the greatest commandment. Just to make sure we got this, just to make sure we understood, he did not just tell us, but he showed us. He **accepted** mockery, and humiliation, and torture, and rejection, and agony, and betrayal. He **accepted** them – not because he was weak, but because he was strong, because he wanted to show us what love really is – a commandment of complete and unreserved gift of self.

It is sad to say that this idea of love is rather counter-cultural, even today. It seems more and more that our culture, our society, and even those sitting in our pews, are losing touch with what love is really supposed to be. Cardinal Timothy Dolan, a son of St. Louis and Cardinal Archbishop of New York, put it this way:

***“In a culture that prefers getting to giving, and entitlement to responsibility, in a society that considers every drive, desire, or urge as a right, and where convenience and privacy can trump even the right to life itself, and in a mindset where freedom is reduced to the liberty to do whatever we want, wherever we want, whenever, however, with whomever we want, rather than the duty to do as we ought...”***

Well, in that culture, my brothers and sisters, this meaning of love might as well be a yellow light out there on Five Mile & Newburgh.

This commandment of love that Christ gives us, that he *shows* us, is something supernatural. The natural way that we engage in a relationship is to evaluate what we can get out from someone: **“This person is fun to be around.” “This person annoys the heck out of me.” “This person can get me tickets to the ballgame.” “This person always seems to need something.”** When we begin to embrace the commandment of love that Jesus gives us, those selfish desires or considerations take a back seat; and we begin to see others as God sees them.

**Maybe this week, try to make a list of the acts of love you want to do for people. *What is one small thing you can do to lighten the load of your spouse? What is one thing you can do to make your boss’ day just a bit easier? What is one small thing you can say or do to make your parents smile? And the tough one: what is one thing you can do to help a stranger see the love of Christ?***

This week and beyond, **I challenge you to be that candle in the darkness.** May all of us burn brightly, slowly dying to ourselves, slowly sacrificing what we have and are, even to the point of laying down our lives, to provide the light and warmth of the love of God to those around us.

Peace,  
Deacon Don

