

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. 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.

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 and the core of Christian life: that in every parish and ACC program and event, 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.

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.

That charity is also seen in marriage and family life, where love, open to life, mirrors God’s own self-giving and creative generosity that sustains all things. Today, we honor all mothers whose lives are

forever changed by bearing within themselves that creative love of God which gives new life. Something like Mary, within them divine and human love meet. And like Mary's own love for Jesus, outlined in the Rosary, every mother's love knows joy, sorrow, moments of light and the hope of glory for her loved ones. *Peter says God shows no partiality – and Mary, being full of grace, has that same kind of love without partiality: Mary loves you and me as much as she loves Joseph and Jesus.*

There are many inspiring stories of motherly love, but you can provide you own: call to mind some specific thing that your own mom has done for you out of her patient, faithful care. Even if she is no longer among us, in prayer take a moment to thank her and thank God for a mother's gifts that are living echoes of those words of Jesus: *“As the Father has loved Me, so I also love you.”*

To love that way requires that we humble ourselves; and the great Christian writer C.S. Lewis said the secret of humility is not to think less of ourselves, but simply to think of ourselves less. To love is to attend to the other person, and we start with humble confidence in the friendship of Jesus Who has chosen us first.

“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.