

Theme of the Week - My friend if

The Gospel on Sunday gives us one of the most memorable instructions from Jesus, "*This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you.*" A beautiful commandment to give and one in which can only bring us true happiness when truly believed in and accepted.

In English, we use the word love a lot but sometimes we use it for things we just actually like. Whereas in other languages, they have many words for love and then use different words for the correct context it should be given in.

So much of what we love is actually to do with self-gratification and possession. It is tied up with our own need for fulfilment. This then can make the learning or knowing of what God's love means difficult for us to understand. The reason being is we might associate the meaning of love from our own experiences; how a family member, friend or someone you know shows their love for you or how you show it to them. Imagine you have a bag of sweets and you are with a sibling. You offer them a sweet because you love them, but do you give them the entire bag? Probably not and depending on the circumstance, you may not give them a sweet at all! It doesn't mean you do not love them but based on the context our illustration of love may differ. As a result, when we try to understand the true meaning of God's love it can be difficult to understand. However, the reality is God's love overflows for us. Imagine a waterfall and how the water continues to pour out no matter what, God's love pours out for and it is never stops. Sometimes, based on the way we feel or how we have acted, we may turn and think God's love might be limited because of our actions, but it isn't. The love that Jesus talks about in today's Gospel is about obedience, willing co-operation and sacrifice that produces joy.

Jesus knew he would soon die and rise to new life - this was a sign of his love for everyone, not just you and me, but everyone! He also knew his disciples would not understand the things that would happen so he told them how much he loved them and asked them to share this love with others. Not just those who believed at the time, but to go out to everyone, believers and non-believers and show them God's love. We could quite easily misinterpret what Jesus says here. He is not saying that his love will depend on whether we obey or not, this would be a conditional love. Obedience in the mind of Jesus is surrender of will that can only flow from the absolute security of knowing ourselves loved and cherished by God. God wants the best for us and for those around us. Such surrender brings joy, freedom, and a delight in 'obeying' commands and living the loving way.

Pope Saint John Paul II said, "*We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures. We are the sum of the Father's love for us*". This too is a beautiful quote because Pope Saint John Paul II is saying we have successes and failings and we will always encounter these in life but this does not define us. What we need to do is open our hearts and minds (maybe in prayer) and accept the endless love God gives us. We too can truly bear the fruit we are commissioned to grow and only then, will we truly be fulfilled and finally see the entirety of God's love.

My friends if

Weekly Reflections
5th May 2024



A reading from the Gospel of St John (15:9-17)

Jesus said to his disciples: 'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete. This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you. I shall not call you servants any more, because a servant does not know his master's business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father. You did not choose me: no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last; and then the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name. What I command you is to love one another.'

Prayer for the Week

Loving God,

We praise you for your love that cannot be kept down, whatever it may face. May the knowledge of that love inspire us to keep on following you.

Through Christ our Lord

Amen

Saint of the week - Matthias the Apostle - 14th May



Matthias first appears in the Acts of the Apostle when he was chosen to replace the treacherous Judas Iscariot, who hanged himself in shame. Unlike the other apostles Matthias was not chosen by Jesus who had already ascended into Heaven, but was elected by the remaining eleven.

Following the miracle of Pentecost, at which he was present, Matthias seems to have preached in Judea and then went on a missionary journey to Cappadocia. He was apparently stoned to death by Pagans.

Matthias was:

Attentive and Discerning

Day 1

Can you write down three things you love? Think of three categories: something silly (like "pizza"), something unexpected (a hobby or interest) and something serious (family, God etc.) Share this with your classmates, why do you love these things?

Day 2

If you had to explain to someone the similarities and differences between how God loves us and our tradition notions of love, what would you say? What has been your experience of feeling or believing God's love? How do you think it has changed you?

Day 3

Ascension Thursday - This is a Holy day of Obligation in the Church where Jesus ascended into Heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father.