

SIXTH EASTER SUNDAY – YEAR B - 5/5/2024

Jn 15:9-17

Jesus said to his disciples:

"As the Father loves me, so I also love 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 joy may be in you and your joy might be complete.

This is my commandment: love one another as I love you.

No one has greater love than this,

to lay down one's life for one's friends.

You are my friends if you do what I command you.

I no longer call you slaves,

because a slave does not know what his master is doing.

I have called you friends,

because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.

It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you

and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain,

so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you.

This I command you: love one another".

REFLECTION: "THE GREATEST LOVE" – Msgr. Peter Quang Nguyen

Today's Gospel talks about love, from the love of God's Trinity to humanity, through Jesus' affirmation: "*As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Remain in my love*" (John 15:9). Jesus also gave his disciples a new commandment: "*Love one another as I have loved you.*" The new commandment is "*Love Like God Loves*", which is the greatest love when we are willing to sacrifice, including our life, for the person we love.

1. Stay in the love of the Most Holy Trinity.

In the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity: God the Father loves God the Son has mysteriously inferred the Holy Spirit of Love. **The love between the Three Persons is interconnected - towards each other - becoming one with each other.** Jesus loves his disciples by always looking towards them - wants his disciples to also respond to that love by always looking towards Him, uniting with Him: REMAIN STAYING in Him, to become ONE with Him as He is in the Father and the Father is in Him. Jesus' desire for his disciples is: "**Remain in His love.**" Indeed, love is not about meeting each other - knowing each other and then parting, but about remaining in love for each other.

a. Staying in love means always looking towards each other: That means even if we have to be "away in sight but not apart in heart", geographical space or time separation cannot separate two hearts that are looking towards each other. When Christians love Jesus, they always remember and unite with Him everywhere, every time, in every activity of life. Saint Paul once said: "*Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Is it tribulation, misery, famine, danger, persecution, sword? I firmly believe that: whether it be death or life, angels or demons, present or future, or any power, heaven or abyss or any other creature, nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Rom. 8: 35, 39).

b. Staying in love means keeping each other's word: When people truly love each other, they are not afraid to do it:

- what is required of each other;
- commit to mutual obligations;
- wish and want to do what your lover loves and do your best to please your lover.

Christians cannot say they love God without keeping God's commandments. We Christians are called to love God and do God's will, which is to keep and live by God's commandments. Jesus clearly stated the conditions for remaining in His 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"* (John 15: 10).

Thus, to love each other is to stay in love for each other, not for anyone else - to love God is to love God alone, not for wealth, fame, profit, or pleasure ... To love each other is to always focus on each other - about each other - our hearts and minds are always united with God everywhere, at all times, not giving in to passions ... Loving each other is always worrying about and fulfilling each other's wishes rather than worrying about fulfilling your own. In short, loving God is living and practicing God's will through fulfilling the commandments He teaches and gives, not "forcing" God to do our own will.

2. The greatest love.

Jesus chose to love people at the highest level by loving freely - dying for the person he loves. He also invited his disciples: **"Love one another as I have loved you"** (John 15: 12). Loving as I loved, that is, as Jesus loved us - sacrificing himself for us, then now and forever, we must also know how to sacrifice for each other.

"There is no greater love than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (Gal. 15:13). When two people love each other, letters, gifts, money, words... are just dependent things, what they need is each other's humanity, they need to completely dedicate themselves to each other, they need to be united with each other. Although they are two, they are called to be one ... That is also the nature of the Sacrament of Marriage. More than anyone else, Jesus is the King of Love, He understands the lack of people who are the object of His love. What proves love: it is the giving of His own body to humans?

Friendship (Ga. 15: 14-15). When placing himself in friendship, Jesus had to lower (emptied) himself from a great and incomparable God to an ordinary human being in order to be friends with humans.

When we confide in someone about our personal or family situation, even the thoughts and secrets of our life, it is a sign that we trust that person's confidentiality, want to be close to that person, and want to open our heart to let that person know and come into our life. Jesus also did the same to become friends with us: *"I no longer call you servants, because the servant does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, for everything I have heard from my Father I have made known to you"* (John 15:14-15).

3. I have chosen you (John 15:16).

We recall what Jesus said earlier: *"No one can come to me unless the Father draws him."* Obviously, the gift of faith is a divine gift, not an easy thing to have. Vocation does not begin with humans' desire but is influenced by God first. This is also what Jesus told Peter when he confessed that He was the Christ: *"... Not of the flesh, but of the Father's revelation."*

Indeed, knowing Jesus Christ is a gift of love that comes from God the Father. All human efforts cannot replace the grace God gives when choosing them and calling them to know Him according to the truth. The Gospel accounts all show that it was Jesus who came to call the disciples, not the disciples who chose him.

Jesus did not choose and leave them there but sent out disciples so that they could bear fruit. Indeed, choosing to follow God is not to be comfortable and relaxed, but to give and to serve, to benefit souls. Disciples of Jesus have a standard to express a true love: obeying God's commandment of love for others, loving selflessly, without calculating profit or loss, but **"love as I have loved you"** when willing to sacrifice his life for his friends.

Lord Jesus, you loved and loved to the end when giving up the last drop of blood on the cross, please let us also know how to love, sacrifice, and give to each other freely - without comparison or calculation so that we can become true disciples of Jesus - remaining in Jesus' love forever. Amen.