

**5 Easter
May 19, 2019**

**In the name of God, who in Jesus,
taught us the meaning of unconditional LOVE.
AMEN**

Sometimes Fr. Ted and I have a chuckle about who gets the tough Scripture Readings to preach about, but I have to say that I lucked out this time because today's Gospel is a favorite of mine and very challenging. It does start off kind of startling though- because it is the scene of the Last Supper and we are at that terrible moment when Judas has arisen from the table and slipped out of the Upper Room. The circle of the twelve is broken, and the stage is set for dreadful events. The emotions and thoughts of Jesus must have become extremely intense at this moment, for he immediately says, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him." In my own searching for what it means to give Glory to God in MY living, our Lord now offers very clear direction. Saying that it is clear does not say it is easy. But, there are times by the grace of God, we are enabled to do or say something that does give Glory to God.

Jesus says in that Upper Room, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another By this everyone will know that you are my disciples." More than in any other way, we give Glory to God by our capacity to love. Jesus says, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. *Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.*" Well, no wonder he commands it since we find it so difficult to do of our own human nature!

Flower shops can tell us...their busiest days are Mother's Day and Valentine's Day. Because it seems to help if we can say it with flowers...say what we don't seem to be able to say ...or demonstrate ...often or well enough on our own. The other night there was a show on TV in which the easy remark was made that, "It goes without saying that I think you are wonderful." //// Well, The GREAT response on the part of the one to whom that was said, was, /// "Isn't it strange that the loving things go without saying, while the hurtful things are spoken so readily?"

Consider...///Hallmark sells millions of dollars worth of Valentines with the message of love already on them, and the same for Mothers Day. Millions of dollars worth! And why? /// Well, because as they have learned and capitalized on...many people need a REASON like Valentine's Day to express words of love to those near to them and even to those who are not part of their family. And...even if these people want to express their love...these people being some of us, we wouldn't know what to say or how to say it.

C.S. Lewis, an outstanding Christian writer of the 20th Century, in his classic book, *The Four Loves*, wrote ..."To love at all is to be TERRIBLY VULNERABLE. ///// Love anyone or anything and your heart will certainly be wrung...and possibly be broken. ///// / Now, //// if you want to make sure of keeping your heart in tact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to a pet animal. Wrap your heart carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up quite safely in the casket of your selfishness; your self needs. // But.....in that casket....safe, yes, ... ,BUT it WILL

change. It will not be broken. No, it will not be broken. It will become Unbreakable, impenetrable, and unavailable." ////////////// C.S.LEWIS goes on to write: "The only place outside of Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers of love.....is Hell." That's C. S. Lewis writing from the depth of his soul about what he experienced when Christianity, following the way of Jesus Christ, became real for him.

And now, today, in our Gospel, Jesus is telling us this very day that his whole message is Love. And indeed... to truly Love can be costly...in fact, it probably will be costly. //// As we continue in our Easter Season, we are hearing what Jesus has been imparting to those who are his disciples, those who follow him, and, I hope that IS all of us. So, we need to pay attention, as some of the schoolteachers among us would say: 'Pay attention!!' Jesus says, I will not be with you much longer... and I am trying to give you everything you need to have life and to have it abundantly. Jesus is trying to get them, and us, to focus on what really matters.

Some years ago, I worked with a priest who had a sign on his office door that in all honesty, I just didn't get for quite awhile, but ...when I did, it has stayed with me as a most profound teaching. "It said, The Main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." Well, Jesus is clearly saying that the main thing is to Love.

There is a story about a man who had a huge boulder in his front yard. He got so tired of this big unattractive, huge stone in the center of his lawn that he decided to take advantage of it and turn it into an object of art. He went to work on it with hammer and chisel, and chipped away at the huge boulder for, what seemed to be an endless time, until, finally, it became a beautiful, majestic stone elephant. When he finished, it was gorgeous, breath-taking.

His nextdoor neighbor came by after the project was completed and asked, "How did you ever carve such a marvelous likeness of an elephant?" The man who had done the carving simply answered, "I just chipped away everything that didn't look like an elephant!"

If you have anything in your life right now that doesn't look like love, then with the help of God, chip it away! If you have anything in your life that doesn't look like compassion or mercy or empathy, then, let God help you chip it away! If you have hatred or prejudice or judgment or envy in your heart, for God's sake, and for your own sake, get rid of it! Let God chip away everything out of your life that does not look like tender-heartedness...like the Love that Jesus commands of us.

The words of Jesus ARE strange words. He is COMMANDING us to love. He says this is the NEW commandment. He says in today's Gospel, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." So, ... he gives us a new law telling us....., no,COMMANDING us to love. And this commandment invades the very depths of our beings; this commandment is to have jurisdiction over the way we think, the way we feel, over our opinions, our prejudices, the destructive things our tongues hurl into God's world, our concepts of superiority in our opinions, and over the way we respond to the world around us. Clearly, our Lord, Jesus Christ wants the very core of our lives to be THE NEW COMMANDMENT to love one another as he has loved us. //////

A number of years ago Henry Drummond wrote a classic sermon, which he called "The Greatest Thing in the World." I discovered it as a little pamphlet, not knowing that it had been a sermon. But I'll never forget the ending of it. He concluded by suggesting///// that if you put a piece of iron in the presence of an electrified field, // that piece of iron itself will become electrified. // AND in the presence of that electrical field, it is changed into a MAGNET. As long as it remains in contact with that field of power, it will continue to attract other pieces to itself. ///// WE are like that piece of iron. In the presence of Jesus Christ, we experience his Love and take on his likeness. We are changed, // electrified by the Holy Spirit, and WE therefore, attract others to the same love of God that we experience.

Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.'

May it be so for each of us, more and more each day.

AMEN