

Love one another (as I have loved you)

In today's gospel, Jesus says, "Love one another; just as I have loved you". As Christians, we can focus on the words, 'love one another' and reflect on what they mean but it is the second part of Jesus' command that is important, 'Just as I have loved you'. This Sunday's gospel comes from John who was inspired by the love Jesus showed for others. In John's gospel, chapters 13-17 refer to the Last Supper scene and the conversation that Jesus has with his disciples. The above quotation comes from that meal and when we look at what Jesus says in the meal, then we begin to understand those words, 'Just as I have loved you'.

Within the meal, Jesus washes the feet of his disciples and tells them that He has given them an example of service to follow. Although He is their Lord and master, he asks them to have a love that has at its foundation, humility and service. He goes onto to tell them of the sacrifice that he will make, that He is prepared to die for them. "A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends, you are my friends." Many Christians in the following decades were prepared to take those words and live by them in the persecution. Love is about putting the needs of others first.

Within the meal, Jesus asks them to keep His words as He has kept the Father's words and those who do so will be loved by the Father and Himself. Love is linked to putting the words of Jesus into action. As Jesus talks to them, he refers to unity and peace. He prays that His disciples will be united as one, just as the Father and Jesus are one. Love is about working together and not being divided. As He prays for them, He tells them that the greatest gift He can share with them is His peace, a peace that can help us face and overcome any worries or anxieties that might come our way. Love for others is about giving the other person the strength to face the difficulties of life with that inner peace.

Within the meal, Jesus tells them that He is the vine and they are the branches that are called to bear much fruit. They can only bear much fruit if they listen to his voice. Each day, Jesus spent time listening to the Father and acting on His words. Love is about listening to the voice of Jesus in our daily prayer and putting His invitation to work with Him, into action.

When we look at that one quote, "Love one another just as I have loved you", it is a quote that has many implications for us: humility, service, sacrifice, unity, peace, bearing of fruit and putting Jesus' words into action. Love for others is a lifetime journey and not just being nice when we feel like it.

Take care
Fthr Keith