

*Whoever loves me will keep my word, says the Lord, and my Father will love him and we will come to him.*

In St John Gospel we are reminded of the commandment Jesus gave his disciples: "Love one another as I love you." It was God who first loved us. As we call to mind God's love for us in Jesus, let us also call to mind that our response to that love is to love one another.

We may have a problem today when we hear the word "love." Yet the problem lies in the way that we use the word itself. The world today tends not to use it in the same sense as the New Testament writers did. We trivialize it, talking about loving chocolate, or loving our favorite football team, pop group or TV program. Popular music is filled with words about love, but usually the meaning is sentimental.

When we read in the first letter of John, that God is love; and then when our Gospel today is telling us of the love the Father has for Jesus, "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you," we may wonder what all this means. The love within the inner relationships in the depths of the Trinity is, of course, beyond our understanding. But it's certainly not a trivial or sentimental love. In fact it is a love that is deep and self-sacrificial.

John's letter tells us that God the Father's sacrificial love is shown through the activity of the Son: "God's love for us when he sent his Son to be the sacrifice that takes our sins away." Jesus has often been called "the man for others," and he showed that generous love for us on the cross. Accepting crucifixion was clearly not trivial or sentimental. It was a tough, brutal, self-giving act of love on the part of Jesus.

Jesus calls us to make this kind of love our own. "Remain in my love," he says, that same love that is in the heart of the Trinity, that same love that is demonstrated in the life and death of Jesus. "Love



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one another, as I have loved you." Jesus is calling us to have that love for others: that love that we saw demonstrated a few short weeks ago when he washed the feet of his friends; and then when he offered his life for us on the cross.

To remain in Jesus' love is not to sit back and enjoy peace of mind and a sublime state of equilibrium that is untroubled by all that passed by. It is not a self-indulgent sense of the certainty of our own salvation without reference to anyone else. Jesus calls us to love as he did. That means a love that does not concern itself with our wants, our own desires, our own emotions; it means a love that is extended even to those we would not want to love. This is, truly, a love that is stronger than death.

If we can learn to show this love, then we too become people for others, just as Jesus is. So let us pray for a deeper commitment in our lives to that true Christian love that is not just inward desire but outwardly gives.



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