

## **for John 15:9-17 - Love one another: 9 May 2021**

I wonder what you would say to your family and friends if you were about to set off on a long journey – or if you knew this would be the last time you would see them - give them your love – some words of advice or encouragement perhaps?

This is what Jesus is doing with his disciples in this reading – this scene is set the night before Jesus was crucified. Jesus has washed their feet, told them what is to come and told them about the True Vine – God the Father is the vine-grower – Jesus himself the true vine – and the disciples are the branches which will bear rich fruit if they abide in him – the vine – so as to stay attached to the energy and nourishment that comes from the vine-grower.

If you keep my commandments Jesus says - you will abide in my love, just as Jesus keeps his Father's commandment and abides in his love and all this so that their joy may be complete...  
'I have called you friends, not servants ...'

But this is not just about the feeling of love – but the action that comes from it. Jesus as our role model lived out his love in healing, praying teaching and serving – that is the Christian idea of love that we strive for...

The commandment for the disciples back then – and for us today is to love one another – just as Jesus has loved them and loves us. But they – and us - are also to serve one another.

By obeying the commandment we abide in his love – but equally, by abiding in his love we can obey the commandment...

What does Jesus mean by abiding? Well, it's more than waiting or resting – it's a sense of personal and intentional commitment.

The disciples are told that they are loved by Jesus and Jesus is loved by the Father – and if they abide in the love of Jesus and love him in return – if they fully commit to the relationship, they will also be abiding - in the love of the Father.

By abiding, the disciples are entering into a true friendship. They are united with the Father and the Son by love – by the Holy Spirit of love – it is perfect love freely bestowed upon them through Christ – a divine circle of love that we know as a Trinitarian love – the love of the Father for the Son – the Son for the Father and the love of the Father and Son together for us all through the Holy Spirit.

As we are filled with the fullness of God's holy loving Spirit – then God – love – is glorified on earth as we obey the commandment to love one another – by loving one another we are loving Christ in everyone we encounter – and by loving Christ we are loving God – and actually – when we are caught up in this circle of love it makes sense to see that we are actually loving ourselves at the same time...

To be chosen and loved by God through his Son Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit is the deepest and most precious friendship of all.

Everyone is loved and chosen by God – but not everyone responds and enters into this relationship of friendship – and for those people, the joy of being connected to God, our creator and source of love - will always be incomplete because the true circle of true and eternal love is broken.

Spiritual friendship is not about what we are going to get – but rather what we are going to give – it is unconditional and doesn't depend on a return – we want a friendly response, but our hand of friendship is given freely and lovingly anyway – just as God's hand is always reaching out to us...

Today, as we prepare to pray our way to Pentecost – when we remember how the Holy Spirit entered into the hearts and lives of the followers of Jesus who in turn made it known to others – we can do our part by using our 'pray for 5' prayer cards to pray for five people who we would love to see enter into a relationship with God through Jesus so that the love of God through the Holy Spirit would be made known to them – so it could be present with them on their hearts and through the ups and downs of their lives – as we tie the knots in our prayer band, we can hold them to God in hope

And that is how we can fully experience and enjoy this spirit of divine love flowing through us – As Jesus said: 'if you keep my commandments you will abide in my love...' – nurturing our personal friendship with

Jesus through prayer – the best we can - in order to obey his commandment to love one another will keep us connected and abiding in the love of God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit...

Friendships are made along the way of life – in different places at different times, some lasting a lifetime, some fleeting and for the now...

As you think about how friendship has played out in your life – we might be encouraged to think about what kind of friendship we have with Jesus – what kind of friend is he? What kind of friend do you think he would want us to be to him? What kind of friend would you like him to be?

Here's what Jesus says – to you and me....'You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appoint[ed] you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last...'

I'll finish with some words from Pope Francis – he says this:

'God, who call us to generous commitment and to give him our all, offers us the light and the strength needed to continue on our way. In the heart of this world, the Lord of life, who loves us so much, is always present. He does not abandon us, he does not leave us alone, for he has united himself definitively to our earth, and his love constantly impels us to find new ways forward. (*Pope Francis, Laudato Si*245).

Let us pray:

Father, we pray that we might go forward into this week with your friendship on our hearts, your light along the path – and your strength to give out the love to others that you have given us through our friendship with Jesus, your son and our saviour. Amen