

FATHER MARK SCHULTE
HOMILY
FIFTH SUNDAY EASTER (C)
MAY 18, 2025

“Authentic Love”

My Brothers and Sisters, most of us are familiar with the ten commandments, those laws that God gave to Moses and the Israelites on the mountain, shortly after they were freed from slavery in Egypt. Now we hear in today's Gospel that Jesus said to His apostles, “I give you a ‘new commandment,’ love one another as I have loved you.” It is the commandment of love. But what does it mean to love as Jesus loved (Jn 13:31-35)?

For many people their understanding of love is more or less superficial, a popular notion of romantic love, the kind of love mentioned in the movies, romance novels, love songs and poetry. But is this the kind of love that Jesus is referring to? His command was to love one another as He loves us. All love has its source in God because God is love by His very nature. God created us because He loves us. He loves us so much that He gave us a free will to choose to love or not love, and above all to choose to love or not love Him. Love can't be forced – it must be freely given.

True love is salvific – its purpose is to save in some way the object of its love. For example, Adam chose to turn away from His creator God by disobeying Him. Adam's act of disobedience was an act of self-love. By listening to the suggestion of the devil, Adam acted against God's will – and in so doing he took his love away from God and gave his allegiance to the devil (Gn 3:1-24). He sinned against God. Sin is the opposite of love. Adam's selfish act brought death not only to himself but also to the whole of humanity and weakened the human person (CCC 405-406).

God's love has compassion for this weakened state of man. Out of his love for man God sent His son into the world to suffer and die for the sake of man as a form of expiation to the Father (CCC 457, 604, 1459, 1992). Jesus becomes the supreme expression of God's love. Jesus' death on the cross becomes the sacrifice that saves us from eternal death. Jesus said that “No greater love has any man than to lay down his life for another” (Jn 15:13). Again, Jesus said “love one another as I have loved you.” How did He love us? He sacrificed His life for us that we might live eternally. And so, we see that true love must go beyond mere romantic love. Real love is sacrificial love. Real love saves someone else's life at the expense of our own life. True love is salvific. Jesus showed us how to do this by offering His life for ours. That was the price paid to the devil on behalf of Adam and all humanity.

True love is not only warm, fuzzy, and comfortable, at times it is also a kind of tough love. The warm, fuzzy, comfortable love is like the love between two young lovers who are discovering love for the first time. Sooner or later that kind of love must transition into tough love. Tough love happens when we tell a person what they need to hear, not what they want to hear. Tough love helps the other person grow into a better person. Tough love is the parental love that Mom and Dad have for their children as they discipline them for adulthood. Tough love doesn't “feel” like love,

especially when we are on the receiving end of it. Scripture tells us that the father will discipline his son if he truly loves him (Prov 13:24).

In whatever form, love is the greatest gift that we can give to another. God has set the example for this by giving us His only son, Jesus Christ. Jesus passes this same gift on to His disciples, by saying “Love one another as I have loved you.”

Charity is another word for love and charity is the source of all the other virtues (CCC 1822-1829). Jesus accepted His cross as an act of love on our behalf. Now He commands us to do the same thing, for God the Father and for our neighbor. The mystery of the cross is that the cross itself has become a symbol of love, God’s love for us. Jesus said that He is glorified by the Father by accepting His passion and death on the cross. We share in His glory by uniting our crosses, to His cross, as a sign of our love for Him.

True love bears fruit:

- The fruit of your love is your children.
- The fruit of Jesus’ loving sacrifice is all the baptized, which are His children.
- He feeds His children with the fruit of the cross, The Holy Eucharist, which is the sacrament of love.

Divine love, tough love or romantic love, all have their source in God, who is love. When you do your bedtime examination ask yourself: “How have I loved today”? Failure to love is a failure to be a Christian.

NOTE: CCC = Catechism of the Catholic Church