**202 05-18-2025 Fifth Sunday of Easter**

[**Acts 14:21-27**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/acts/14?21)

After Paul and Barnabas had proclaimed the good news to that city and made a considerable number of disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch. They strengthened the spirits of the disciples and exhorted them to persevere in the faith, saying,
“It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.”
They appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, commended them to the Lord in whom they had put their faith. Then they traveled through Pisidia and reached Pamphylia. After proclaiming the word at Perga they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work they had now accomplished. And when they arrived, they called the church together and reported what God had done with them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

[**Ps 145:8-9, 10-11, 12-13**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/psalms/145?8)

R (cf. 1) I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.
The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness.
The LORD is good to all and compassionate toward all his works.
R I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.
Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD, and let your faithful ones bless you.
Let them discourse of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might.
R I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.
Let them make known your might to the children of Adam,
            and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
Your kingdom is a kingdom for all ages, and your dominion endures through all generations.
R I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

[**Rev 21:1-5a**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/revelation/21?1)

Then I, John, saw a new heaven and a new earth. The former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, God’s dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them as their God.
He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, for the old order has passed away.”
The One who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.”

[**Jn 13:31-33a, 34-35**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/john/13?31)

When Judas had left them, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and God will glorify Him at once. My children, I will be with you only a little while longer. I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.
This is how all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

This was kind of a short Gospel reading. Only a few sentences, but there is so much packed into these few sentences. Jesus talks about Himself being glorified and God being glorified in Him – although related, that is a subject for a different homily. What I am going to talk about is Jesus’ new commandment. He tells us, **“I give you a new commandment: love one another.”** *(John 13:34)*

The Commandment of love is not new. The Old Testament already commanded, **“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”** *(Leviticus 19:18)* What is new here is that Jesus tells us, **“I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.”** *(John 13:34)*

There are a couple of things to note: First, this is a **Command**. It is not an invitation. It is not a request and it is not an option. First and foremost, it is a command or an order. Being a command, it calls for total obedience on our part. In other words, it is an obligation to love one another, and to love one another as Jesus loves us. Hmmm, this isn’t starting out very easy, is it?

Second, the Lord says to us: **“Love one another.”** He did not say,

“Love one another when you are both young, or when you are both healthy.” He did not say, “Love one another when the other one has stopped offending you or upsetting you.” He did not say, “Love one another when the other loves you back or is good to you.” He did not say, “Love one another when he/she is cute, or he/she is rich.” The Lord says, “Love one another,” without any conditions or limitations. He might say, “Love one another even if she/he doesn’t love you or like you or refuses to forgive you or he/she doesn’t need you anymore or she/he is no longer cute and desirable.” In other words, you are to love and to love forever. Hmmm, that certainly didn’t make it any easier, did it?

 Third, the Lord says: **“Love one another as I have loved you.”** *(John 13:34)* Once again, Jesus reminds us that love is the soul of our Christian life. When St. Bernard was asked, “What is the measure of love with which we are to measure?” He answered, “The measure of love is to love without measure.” Our Lord Jesus Christ gave us an example of a love without measure. He did not condemn Mary Magdalene for her past sins. He called St. Matthew to be His apostle even though Matthew was a tax collector and a sinner.

He even was not afraid to touch and heal the sick! Jesus stretched out His hands to the lepers who were considered as ‘untouchables’ during that time because nobody wanted to touch them and be near to them.

This is the reason why we have to love one another **not** in the measure of our human ability to love or on account of how others can return our love but as God has loved us. Now, it has gone from difficult to How is that even possible? Scripture tells us.

Philippians 4: 13: **“I have the strength for everything through Him who empowers me.”**

Matthew 19: 26: **“Jesus looked at them and said, ‘For human beings this is impossible, but for God all things are possible.’”** We do it with God’s help.

**“As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.”** *(John 13:34)* How did Jesus love His Apostles? How does Jesus love us? Just before our Gospel today, He gave His Apostles a demonstration of His love. He washed their feet. After He washes their feet He tells them, **“You call me ‘teacher’ and ‘master,’ and rightly so, for indeed I am.** **If I, therefore, the master and teacher,**

**have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.”** *(John 13: 14 – 15)*

Is Jesus telling us we should become professional foot washers? Not exactly. Jesus put Himself at the service of His Apostles to show His love. He asked nothing in return but that the Apostles followed His example. Jesus’ Apostles were the beginning of the Church. Jesus was caring for the church. He was, in fact, putting Himself in service of the Church which is “The Mystical Body of Christ.” He was putting Himself in service of others. Jesus told us, **“the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.”** (*Matthew 20: 28)*

We see other instances of authentic caring for the Body of Christ in the Gospels. In the chapter right before this one, the day before Palm Sunday, Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, anoints Jesus’ feet with a liter of perfumed oil and dries them with her hair. *(ref. John 12: 1 – 3)*

This is a precursor to the women coming to anoint Jesus’ body after His death and burial. From Mark’s Gospel, **“When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go and anoint Him.”** *(Mark 16: 1)*

After Jesus’ death, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus so he could bury it. Nicodemus brought myrrh and aloes so they could give Jesus’ body a proper Jewish burial. *(ref. John 19: 38 – 40)*

Now, you might say, “Wait a minute, you are mixing things up. These are all examples of people caring for the physical body of Christ, not doing service for the Church.” But you see, the Church being the “Mystical Body of Christ,” is not just a quaint saying. The Church – “The Mystical Body of Christ” is the Body of Christ! These are all examples of being in service to the Church.

We are to live by the new law, the “new commandment” that He gave us in His final hours. The love He commands of us is no human love but a supernatural love. We love each other as Jesus loved us in suffering and dying for us. We love in imitation of His love.

This kind of love is only made possible by the Spirit poured into our hearts at Baptism *(see Romans 5:5)*, and renewed in the sacrifice His priests offer in every Mass. By our love we glorify the Father. And by our love all peoples will know that we are His people, that He is our God.

 Love changes everything. Loving is worth it because it offers hope and new life. Jesus loved us and loved us to the end. *(ref. John 13:1)* His resurrection was the triumph of love over hate, of light over darkness. Because of it, love remains the greatest power in heaven and on earth.

By giving us the power to love, we have become partners in God’s perfect love that continues to shape the world every day. We are never more like God than when we love as Jesus did. We love one another as He loved us - not just by imitation but by actual participation. We don’t just copy Him but partake in the source of love that is His love. By His Spirit that lives in us because of our Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist, we love one another with His love that is in our hearts. Therefore, we love one another with His love, united to our own. There is no greater love than this.

 Today’s Gospel ends with Jesus saying, **“This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”**

*(John 13: 35)*

We are supposed to be living our lives set apart from the rest. We are supposed to be living our lives as ones **in** this world but not **of** this world. If someone that does not know us were to see us in school, in the parking lot, in the grocery store, in the doctor’s office, or anywhere else, would they be able to tell that we are followers of Jesus because of the love we have for one another?

Reflecting on what I said here and speaking only about myself, I think I have a lot of work to do. Looking at the current troubles we see every day around the world, we all have a lot of work to do. But Jesus is here with us today as we share in His Sacrifice and consume His Body, Blood, Soul, Humanity, and Divinity in the Holy Eucharist to help us truly Love One Another!