

## GOSPEL

JOHN 13:1,31-35

Before the festival of the Passover; Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

During the supper; when Judas had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified,

and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. "Little children, I am with you only a little longer.

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

The Gospel of the Lord.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways have you experienced Jesus' love in your life? What do you think are barriers to this love?
2. What does it mean to you to "love one another" as Jesus loved us?
3. There are many encouraging, upbuilding and beautiful aspects to Jesus' love for us but his love also challenges us to be our best selves – to pursue virtue and deny ourselves. How would we best love others like this?

## A REFLECTION BY FR FRANCIS J MOLONEY SDB

In the fourth Gospel Jesus departs from his disciples to return to his Father through a 'lifting up'. There can be no misunderstanding what Jesus means when he speaks of his being 'lifted up': he points forward to his crucifixion. But Jesus announces that this 'lifting up' is not only the physical raising of a pierced and suffering body on a stake; it is also the glorification of Jesus, the Son of Man. In this 'lifting up' God is glorified. The cross is not just a place of suffering. It is the place where we can see how much God loves us. For the fourth Gospel Jesus' being 'lifted up' on a cross is a revelation of the greatness of God's love for us.

This is a strange message indeed. Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Man, spent his life utterly to make God known to us. Without him we would never know God: 'No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is turned in loving union towards the Father, he has made him known'. The task of Jesus is to make known a God who is love. He does this especially in his total gift of himself in love unto death: 'Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for one's friends. The death of Jesus is not only his moment of supreme rejection, but also his moment of glory: making God known, thus glorifying God. This is what is meant as today's Gospel opens with a reference to Judas' departure into the night, and Jesus' cry of triumph; the glorification of God is about to happen.

Jesus' task of making God known through the gift of self in love did not end with his death. But the story of Jesus among us is about to come to an end. He is about to leave his disciples. How is the future world to know about the greatness of God's love? Now that Jesus himself is not available to us, his loving life-style is continued by all who claim to be his disciples. Today's gospel juxtaposes the proclamation of Jesus' departure and making known the glory of God with the new commandment: the task of making known a God who is love must go on. It is in the love which can be seen among

all those who claim to be disciples of Jesus that such a God is still revealed to the world. Christian love is to repeat the love of Jesus himself.

The command to love stands at the heart of Christian life. Unfortunately, it is often misunderstood as the weak side of the Christian message in our hard-nosed world. The stern calls to discipline which one can find elsewhere in the New Testament are often preferred as the heart of Christianity. This is a dangerous temptation which must be resisted. Christianity itself is at stake. Christianity only exists because Jesus established a Kingdom where God rules. The essential task of Christianity is to make that God and his rule known. We are told that, 'Greater love has no person but that they lay down their life for their friends, you are my friends'. Herein lies the heart of Christian love, revealing a God who is love.

## REFLECTION QUESTION

- What has struck you from this reflection by Fr Francis?

## PRAYER

*Spend some time in prayer with one another*

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the 'Glory Be' or similar prayer.