

## GOSPEL

JOHN 15:9-17

Jesus said to his disciples: 'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete.

This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you, I shall not call you servants any more, because a servant does not know his master's business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father.

You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last; and then the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name. What I command you is to love one another.'

## A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

During this Easter season, the Word of God continues to point out to us the *styles of life* that are consistent with being the *community of the Risen One*. Among these, today's Gospel presents us with Jesus' instructions: "abide in my love" (Jn 15:9): to abide in Jesus' love. To live in the flow of God's love, to take up permanent residence there, is the condition to ensure that our love does not lose its ardour and boldness along the way. Like Jesus and in him, we too must welcome with gratitude the love that comes from the Father and abide in this love, trying to avoid being separated from it by egoism and sin. It is a demanding project but it is not impossible.

First and foremost, it is important to realize that Christ's love is not a superficial feeling, no; it is a fundamental attitude of the heart which is manifested in living as he wishes. In fact, Jesus states: "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my

love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love" (v. 10). Love is fulfilled in everyday life, in attitudes, in deeds. Otherwise, it is only something illusory. They are words, words, words: that is not love. Love is concrete, every day. Jesus asks us to follow his commandments, which are summarized in the following: "*that you love one another as I have loved you*" (v. 12).

How can this love which the Risen Lord gives us be shared with others? Jesus has many times pointed out to us who the "other" to love is, not with words but with actions. It is the person I encounter on the street and who, with his face and his story, challenges me; it is the one who, with his very presence, compels me to leave my interests and my certainties behind; it is he who awaits my willingness to listen and to walk a stretch of road together. Openness towards each brother and sister, whoever they may be and whatever their situation, beginning with those who are close to me in the family, in the community, at work, at school.... In this way, if I remain united to Jesus, his love can reach the other and draw him to it, to His friendship.

And this love for the other cannot be reserved for exceptional moments, but must be constant in our lives. That is why we are called, for example, to safeguard the elderly like a precious treasure and with love even if they cause economic difficulties and inconveniences, but we must safeguard them. This is why we must give all the assistance possible to the sick, even in the final stages. This is why unborn children are always to be welcomed; this is why, ultimately, life is always to be protected and loved, from conception to its natural end. And this is love.

We are loved by God in Jesus Christ who asks us to love one another as he loves us. But we cannot do this if we do not have his same Heart within us. The Eucharist, in which we are called to participate every Sunday, has the aim of forming the Heart of Christ within us, so that our entire life may be guided by his generous attitudes.

May the Virgin Mary help us to remain in Jesus' love and to grow in our love towards all, especially the weakest, so as to correspond fully to our Christian vocation.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What is one thing that stood out to you from Pope Francis' reflection?
- Pope Francis tells us "love is concrete, every day". Do you have an example of where you have experienced love in this way?
- Jesus reminds us that we did not choose him, he chose us. What does that mean to you to be chosen?

## 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.