

GOSPEL

John 14:15-21

Jesus said to his disciples: 'If you love me you will keep my commandments.

I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you for ever, that Spirit of truth whom the world can never receive since it neither sees nor knows him; but you know him, because he is with you, he is in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come back to you. In a short time the world will no longer see me;

but you will see me, because I live and you will live. On that day you will understand that I am in my Father and you in me and I in you. Anybody who receives my commandments and keeps them will be one who loves me; and anybody who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I shall love him and show myself to him.'

Indeed, for a Christian, joy is present even amid suffering, tribulation and persecution. We consider the martyrs like Saints Felicity, Perpetua and Agnes who went to their martyrdom as though they were going to their wedding. This great Christian joy safeguards peace and love.

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

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Peace, love and joy are three key words which Jesus has entrusted to us, and it is the Holy Spirit who makes them a reality in our lives. In his farewell discourse, in the final days before going up to heaven, Jesus spoke of many things, but they all revolved around the same point, represented by three key words: peace, love and joy.

We recognise that Jesus said many times that the commandment is "to love God and to love thy neighbour". In a similar gospel passage (John 15:9-11), Jesus tells us something new about love: we are to abide in his love. In fact, the Christian vocation is to abide in God's love, i.e., to breathe in and live on this oxygen, to live on this air. Thus, we must abide in God's love.

But what is God's love like? The words of Jesus give us a clue: "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you". It is therefore a love that comes from the Father, and the relationship of love between him and the Father becomes a relationship between him and us. Thus, he asks us to abide in this love that comes from the Father. The Apostle John will then go on and tell us that we must also give this love to others. Yet we must first "abide in love".

How are we to abide in love? Jesus says "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". Therefore, "keeping the commandments" is "the sign that we abide in Jesus' love". This is a beautiful thing: I follow the commandments in my life! So much so that when we remain in love the commandments follow on their own, from love. Indeed, love leads us to fulfil the commandments quite naturally, for the root of love blossoms in the commandments, and the commandments, in the love that comes are the guiding thread which binds the chain that unites the Father, Jesus and us.

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Let us also consider the word “joy”. Jesus says: “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full”. Joy is the sign of the Christian. A Christian without joy either is not a Christian or he is sick, his Christian health is not good...I once said that there are Christians with faces like pickled chilli peppers: always with red faces, with souls to match. And this is unseemly!. These are not Christians, for a Christian without joy is not Christian.

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Three key words, then: peace, love and joy. However, we need to thoroughly understand their true significance; their meaning does not derive “from the world” but from the Father. It is the Holy Spirit who creates this peace; who creates this love that comes from the Father and the Son and which then comes to us; who gives us joy. Yes, it is the Holy Spirit...who is the great forgotten One in our lives. He is the “gift that gives us peace, that teaches us to love, and who fills us with joy”.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/Homily?



Head: Pope Francis refers to the Holy Spirit as the great forgotten One in our lives.



Heart: How do you feel about the idea that joy is the mark of a Christian?



Hands: What are some concrete ways we might practice love, peace and joy more in our lives?

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. Offer **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 praying the ‘Glory Be.’