

SUNDAY, MAY 2, 2010

Love one another as I have loved you...

Homily for the Fifth Sunday of Easter

(Scriptures for today's liturgy)

Jesus addresses himself to “children” in this gospel passage
but he’s not speaking to kids,
he’s speaking to grownups - the apostles!

This morning at the 11:30 Mass,
ten children in our parish will receive Communion for the first time
and I’ll be preaching on this same gospel text:
*My children: this is how all will know that you are my disciples:
if you have love for one another.*

I’m going to tell the children
that receiving Communion has implications.

In Communion we receive Jesus
so we should receive Communion prayerfully
reverently, carefully and lovingly.

But Jesus doesn’t only come to us in the Communion.
Jesus lives in us, too - all of us here.
And if we receive Jesus in Communion
we must to be open to receiving him
in all the ways he comes to us outside of Communion.
That means to welcome, reverence and receive him
into our hearts and lives as he comes to us
at home, at school, at work, at play
in our parish and in our neighborhoods.

It’s usually easy to welcome Jesus when he comes to us in Communion
but it’s harder to welcome him when he comes to us in other people.

It’s a good thing that Jesus didn’t tell us we had to *like* one another -
that might be even harder than loving one another
and loving one another is hard enough.

Jesus calls us to love the people we live with
even when the people we live with are very hard to live with.

Jesus calls us to love the people we work with
even when the people we work make that really hard to do.

Jesus calls us to love the people we go to school with -
even the kids we wish went to another school.

Jesus calls us to love politicians, clergy and sports celebrities
even when what they do (or fail to do) infuriates us.

Jesus calls us to love all the annoying, selfish, maddening, crazy,
irritating, stubborn people who cross our paths every day -
because HE loves them --
and with Jesus, there are simply no exceptions
to his new commandment
that we love one another as he has loved us.

That's a tall order - and it's not an easy one.
And that's why it's important for us to remember, all the time,
that Jesus loves each of US no matter our annoying, selfish,
maddening, crazy, irritating or stubborn WE may be
to all the people whose paths we cross each day.

When we receive Communion, the minister says,
The Body of Christ... The Blood of Christ... - and we say, *Amen*.

Yes, we're saying *Amen* to Jesus in the Eucharist
but we're also saying *Amen* to Jesus
who lives in the hearts, in the lives
in the body and blood of people everywhere.

*Behold! God's dwelling is with the human race.
He will dwell with them and they will be his people...*

That's why we must love one another:
because everyone we bump into
is a temple of God's presence in and among his people.

*This is how all will know that you are my followers:
if you have love for one another.*

Sounds simple in theory but it gets very complicated
when we apply it in real time, in real life,
in the lives of the real people we know.

That's why we call the love of Christ on the Cross a *sacrifice*
and why we call the *Mass* a sacrifice, too.
The word we say at Communion, *Amen*, means "Yes - so be it!"

When we receive the Eucharist
we receive the mystery of the Body of Christ
and that's a lot to swallow...

**As we gather at the table of the Lord's Supper
pray with me that the sacrament of the sacrifice
we receive at this altar
will prepare us to receive Christ
in all who come our way this week.**

- Rev. Austin Fleming