

Homily – 5th Sun Easter – Year C - 2013

“As I have loved you,...so you must love one another.”...I think it’s safe to say that this is the simplest, clearest, & yet hardest commandment of all...If we take Jesus’ words seriously, they should make us jump up out of our seats, run out of the church...& never come back!...The “love one another” part isn’t so bad...You know, say nice things,...do an occasional good deed, watch out for each other... We know how to do that because we are generally nice people, right?...But Jesus doesn’t stop there...He says, **“As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”** ...Now that’s a different story.Jesus doesn’t say to love just any old way,...He says, “Go & love my way...the way I love.”...This is non-negotiable for anyone who chooses to follow Jesus Christ...It’s a commandment not a suggestion... Why is it so hard to love as Jesus loved? ...Well, let’s look at some of the ways Jesus loved.

For Jesus love was not about feelings, emotions,...He didn’t have to like a person to love him...His love was a choice to do good for another...even when the person didn’t deserve it... Jesus probably didn’t like Zachaeus. the crooked tax collector; for sure He didn’t like how Zachaeus was cheating his own people,.. yet. Jesus called Zachaeus out of that tree,...& gave him the chance to repent & turn his life around...Could you or I do that for someone we don’t like?...Or would our feelings, emotions keep us from giving them a 2nd chance?

J’s love wasn’t a “what can you do for me” kind of love...It was never about Him...It was always about what the other person needed...He didn’t expect anything in return...not even thanks. ...When Jesus cured those 10 lepers, only one of them returned to thank Him...Can you or I love so unselfishly?...Or do we need to be commended & feel appreciated? Do we love only when we can get something out of it?

Jesus’ love wasn’t limited to those who were easy to love – good people, righteous people, respected people...He loved the unlovable; He gave His time & attention to the outcasts, the prostitutes, tax collectors, repulsive lepers, annoying beggars... Can we reach out to the not-so-lovable,...those who rarely know love in their lives,...or do we limit our love to those who are easy for us to love,?

Jesus’ love was a humble, stinky feet love...At the Last Supper, He got down on His knees to wash the dusty, grimy feet of His apostles including Judas – who would betray Him – Peter – who would deny Him – & the others who would abandon Him on His way to the cross...Can we lower ourselves to serve others like that, especially when we can’t count on them to be there for us when we need them?

Jesus’ love was a take-a-look-in-the mirror love ...When He stood between the woman caught in adultery & the crowd of people with fists filled with rocks ready to stone her,...He told them, “Look in the mirror...whoever is without sin throw the 1st stone.”...In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned us to take the plank out of our own eye before we take the speck out of another’s eye...When a person does something wrong, ...do we tend to judge their motives or circumstances ...or do we trust them to the Lord who alone knows what’s in their heart?

Jesus’ love was a forgiving love...He forgave Judas & Peter...He prayed for those who hated Him, & asked His Father to forgive those who crucified Him...Can we forgive when someone hurts us? ...Can we offer prayers for those who make us angry?...Or do we hang on to grudges and ill-feelings, & refuse to see any good in someone who has hurt us?

Of course, Jesus’ greatest act of love was His stretching out His arms on the cross as if to say, “I love you this much.”...His love was a sacrificial love,...a risk-everything-for- the-other

love...Can we love that way – giving of ourselves to another selflessly regardless of the cost,...or do we love only when it's convenient, ...or when there is little risk involved?

Yes, Jesus' way of loving was definitely radical... beyond what the world had ever seen...How can we ever love as He did?...I mean, come on, He is Jesus Christ, the Son of God...the only perfect human being who ever lived...It was hard enough for Him,...it's gotta be impossible for us...But Jesus wouldn't give us this command: "love one another as I have loved you,"...unless He knew we could do it...He sees in us, what He saw in His 1st disciples,...not what we are, ...not our weaknesses... not our selfish, judgmental, unforgiving hearts,...He sees what we can become:...disciples who bring His love – the love with which He has loved us – to an unloved, hurting world...And like those 1st disciples, we can't do it on our own...That's why Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to enable us & empower us to love as radically as He did.

When we live by the Holy Spirit,...keep in step with the Holy Spirit,...how we love will show the world that we belong to Jesus Christ...He said, "This is how all will know that you are my disciples, by your love for one another."...It's not how often we come to Mass...or how much we put in the collection...not how many church committees we're on...not the Jesus sticker on our car or the cross around our neck. ...not how many rosaries we pray,...or how well we can quote the Bible...As the old familiar hymn goes:

"They will know we are Christian by our love, by our love...They will know we are Christian by our love."

Jesus often used parables to help get His message across to His listeners....because a parable was something that would stick with them & help them to remember what He had told them...So, I'm going to close with a modern parable I came up with to help us remember today's lesson.

It was a dark and stormy night....There high on the hill an ancient castle stood...you could hear thunder in the distance,...& wolves howling,... Trees were bending in the wind. ...Inside the castle, a faint light shown from the laboratory of the infamous mad scientist Dr. E. Von Gelical! ...There he was in his white lab coat, gazing upon the large table in the middle of the room, covered with a white sheet, under which lay a recently exhumed human cadaver.

Suddenly, Dr. E. Von Gelical shouted: "Igor, come quickly! We have much to do!"...In a moment Igor, his hunchback assistant came shuffling along... a candelabrum in one hand, & dragging a large card-board box in the other...."Yes master...here is everything you ordered. All is ready!"

"Very good. Bring me all the materials Igor. Now we begin....the experiment!..."

The heavens thundered as Igor dragged the box towards the table...Dr. E. Von Gelical raised his fist to the sky: "...Tonight I will conduct the greatest experiment of my career. ...I shall achieve what no man has done before....Tonight from this lifeless body, I will create the perfect CHRISTIAN!...This shall be my greatest triumph,... for I shall create....**Christianstein!**"

More thunder & lightning shook the castle...."They say that I am mad Igor. But Christianstein shall be the greatest specimen of spiritual life the world has ever seen!...The moment has arrived for me to inject him with the serums I have prepared...each one possessing a different trait needed to become a perfect Christian...Now, Igor, give me the large hypodermic needle." ..."Yes master,"...and with hands trembling, Igor handed the Dr. a

long, steel syringe...Then he took several vials of colored liquids from the box, & held them up for the dr. to see.

"Igor, give me first the vial of *daily prayer & Bible reading*."...Then taking the 1st vial, the mad doctor drew a few drops into the syringe...Then one by one, he took the other vials & drew a few drops of each Christian trait into the syringe: *church every Sun.,...generous giving to the collection,...serving on parish committees,... helping the poor,...witnessing for the faith. ...resisting temptation...*& finally... a triple dose of *Catholic guilt*.... When the syringe was filled with all the ingredients of a perfect Christian,... the doctor injected it into the arm of the lifeless body.

"Igor, this is the moment the world has waited for....Get ready to throw the power switch...A million volts of lightning will bring my creation to life... Prepare to meet the perfect Christian, ...CHRISTIANSTEIN!"...Then, as the ancient castle shuddered under an avalanche of thunder & lightning, Igor threw the massive switch & the figure on the table began to tremble...Igor yelled out, "Doctor,...it is moving!"...

"Yes, yes, my creature lives!"

That thing called "CHRISTIANSTEIN" sat up slowly...Then, stiffly, it climbed from the table and stood up towering over the Dr. who exclaimed..."Oh, my creation...you are **magnificent**...Speak to me!" ...The hulking creature looked down at the doctor & angrily began to speak.. "I am NOT magnificent. ...If I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have LOVE, I am nothing...nothing. ...If I give all I have to the poor...& have not LOVE,...I am nothing!"

"LOVE?..Igor what is he talking about?...What did you forget?"..."I don't know Master," Igor answered as he hid himself under the table...The creature raised his arms & slowly moved towards the doctor & growled, "Aarrgghh!" as he threw the doctor to the ground & started reaching for his throat...The doctor managed to jump up... & as he fled for his life with the creature CHRISTIANSTEIN in hot pursuit, he cried out , " Igor, you fool!...how could you forget LOVE... such a small thing!"

.....A few minutes passed before Igor finally had enough courage to come out from under the table. & looking this way & that, he whispered, "I, I think...he's wrong...LOVE is the **biggest** thing....LOVE is the **biggest** thing." AMEN!