

Whether you're Catholic or Protestant, all Christians believe that God is a Holy Trinity, a family of three Persons in perfect love. That is the family we ultimately come from. It's the family who gave us love. We were designed and created for perfect love. But we tend not to stay there. To a greater or lesser degree, we opt for selfishness; we pursue our own desires, what we want, instead of God's will for us, which is to love selflessly. Instead of finding fulfillment by serving others, helping others, we "check out" from our relationship every once in awhile and do our own thing. We look for fulfillment in the wrong places. We become a mix of saint and sinner; we have our noble side and a shadow side, more or less.

Jesus came along to show us how God intended for us to be. During his three years of ministry, he stretched people to get there. At the end of his life, he gets down on his knees to wash his disciples' feet, and then has his Last Supper with them. That's where today's Gospel picks up.

Judas has just left the room. And Jesus says now he's going to be glorified. By that he means his crucifixion, but his disciples don't grasp that. His dying on the cross will be his greatest miracle, his greatest healing, because it's the perfect sacrifice to God that atones for the sins every human being ever to be born. This will glorify Jesus and His Father, for opening Heaven's gates to us.

That's how Jesus can command us at the Last Supper: love one another, as I have loved you. The old commandment God gave Moses, and that Jesus repeated once, was: love your neighbor as yourself. The new commandment is: love one another as I have loved you. And Jesus loves us more than himself. Selfless love.

For Jesus, and those who claim to be his followers, love is not a noun; it's a verb. Love is taking action, it's visible, it's concrete. For Jesus, it was ministering to social outcasts, forgiving people who hurt him, healing people, feeding the hungry, washing feet. At the Last Supper, when he washed feet, He became a servant, making himself equal to the people he was serving.

This is the kind of love Jesus commands us to do: putting other's needs ahead of our own, giving people our time. It's sacrificial love, that fulfills, that endures. For us it can take the form of forgiving people who have hurt us, being a living organ donor, visiting the elderly, serving food to the homeless. This is treating people as equals, like Jesus did, not letting our social status or income level or education level keep us away from helping

people in need. Every day we see people with more needs than we have.

St. Theresa of Avila said the devil wants us to focus on the past and the future, and forget the present. That's how he prevents us from spreading Christ's love: by dwelling on the unfairness of life and how we've been cheated; by seeking only to protect ourselves and our interests; by ruminating over and over about someone or something, getting stuck in the past; or catastrophizing, fearing the worst for the future.

She wrote a poem that's spot-on today's Gospel where Jesus commands us to continue bringing his love to the world. I think I've quoted it before, but it bears repeating today:

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours.
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world.
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good.
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world ...
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

We can start loving like Christ with those simple examples of volunteering I mentioned before. Or else start serving others by what we're good at, what we've been blessed with, where God's goodness and beauty most shine through in our lives and work. Share with others what comes easy to us.

The mantle has been passed. Now we are the ones who are given this mission: "Love one another. As I have loved you."

Fr. John Ozella, Fifth Sunday of Easter, May 19, 2019