

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
Year C April 2, 2013

Theme: I order you to love one another

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Does it strike you as strange that Jesus commanded, ordered, his disciples to love one another?

Command them to look out for each other or maybe take care of one another, but to love each other?

How can you love on command? Love someone by edict?

We either feel love for someone or we don't, don't we? And feelings can't be commanded; they simply are what they are.

But Jesus apparently does not buy into our modern romantic notion that love as a feeling.

Jesus approaches love as a decision, a conscious decision we must make and choose.

We choose to love someone when we choose to do the loving, the good thing, the helpful thing for or toward that person.

We choose not to love that person when we are indifferent to him or her or when we choose the mean, hateful or hurtful toward them.

Even in romance, love must go beyond feeling to decision.

For example, I may initially fall in love and be attracted to someone, but I quickly must decide if I want to meet him, if I want to go out with her; I must decide if I want to date him or ask her to marry to me.

Then of course after a couple of rip snorting fights I have to decide if I want to stay married to her and, then, when he's bald, gray, deaf and got a beer belly I have to decide if he's still my guy.

Jesus apparently believed as his disciples we must decide - as he himself decided - to love one another or decide to be indifferent or decide to hate.

Thus his final words to his disciples -- and his words of today's gospel are those he spoke at the last supper the night before he died, his dying words to them-- are to command them, to order them, to love one another.

A command, an order is possible when love is understood as a decision:

---we can choose to love people we don't like;

---we can decide to love those who are obnoxious and unlovable;

---we can even love people who do not love us or who have even hurt us.

In fact he says this is his new commandment: his disciples are to love one another **as he has loved them.**

Jesus is about to show the extent of his own love for them and for the world by his death on the cross.

And in John's Gospel especially, he freely chose this fate as act of love even though his own disciples deny him, betray him and abandon him, even though his own people reject him.

By commanding us, his disciples, to "**love one another as I have loved you**" Jesus is urging us to decide to do the loving thing whether its deserved or not, in other words to imitate his own example.

This, he said, is precisely how everyone will know they are his disciples.

Loving one another as I have loved you, that will be the give away, that's how everyone will know you belong to me.

A last command, the night before he died- a dying wish, in other words: love one another.

....chose to love even when you sometimes don't especially like each other or when someone has hurt you.

This is the characteristically Christ-like way.

This is how all will know you are my disciples.

How can we refuse such a command when he backed it with his life?

Imagine what our parish communities would look like if we chose such love?

All of these