

Homily based on the Gospel of John 15: 9-17

- Listen to the words of St. John from our second reading today: “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God;”
- But Lord, how can I love that boss at work who drives me crazy with unreasonable demands?
- How can I love that co-worker who is so rude and inconsiderate?
- How can I love that person who says mean and untrue things about me? Or takes me for granted? Who never has a word of thanks or any kind word?
- These are challenging questions for us. I am sure the early disciples had similar questions as they struggled to follow the Lords command to love one another. Questions like: How can I love these Romans who treat us like slaves? How can I love these Pharisees who will not accept the teachings of Jesus and condemned Him to death? Who live richly while I struggle to put food on the table?
- The questions and struggles of those early disciples were not so different from our own in 2021.
- How can I love that bully in school who makes my life miserable? My child’s life miserable?
- How can I love my spouse or close friend or family member who has hurt me? Has left me?
- How can I love someone who opens fire in a crowd of innocent people?

- How can I love those in far away countries who are so different from me?
- These are some of the questions and struggles we face in our world today as we try to carry out the Lord's command to love each other.
- And Lord, how can I learn to love others in these big ways when I still struggle with the small stuff like getting annoyed when the car or person in front of me is moving too slow or the Duncan Donuts worker gets my breakfast order wrong?
- Loving others can be so easy at times and so difficult at other times.
- But Jesus keeps urging us over and over again: keep trying; keep working at it; don't ever give up. Notice what Jesus says in today's Gospel reading: "This I command you, love one and other". Not an option, not a suggestion or recommendation – a command! Loving others is essential to Jesus. Why?
- Because Jesus knows the truth about love!
- Love is the most wonderful gift you can give or receive. And it is the most powerful weapon you can use against enemies.
- Love is the only thing that can heal the most painful hurt. It has the power to change the world one heart at a time.
- God is love. When we love, we become more like God. We get to know God more intimately.
- Love is the ID Badge we wear that identifies us as God's children.

- These are the reasons Jesus stressed the importance of loving each other.
- Living out Jesus' command to love each other will involve struggles and challenges at times. That's the truth of the matter. But the other truth is it can be done, even in the most difficult of situations. We have seen proof of this.
- We saw Pope John Paul II love and forgive the man who tried to assassinate him. We heard the parent who lost a child in the Newtown shootings ask us to pray for the family of the gunman. Look at how Saint Paul's life changed and all of the wonderful things he accomplished when the Christians he once persecuted welcomed him lovingly into their community. We saw Jesus forgive those who beat Him and hung Him on the cross. We have plenty of examples that show us you can love others. It is possible, even in the most difficult of times.
- But we cannot do it on our own. We need God's help. The good news is, when God gives us a command, He also gives us the grace, and the strength we need to carry out that command.
- Every time we pray, and read scripture, each time we welcome Jesus into our life, especially by receiving Him in the Eucharist, we are given the grace to love each other.
- In today's Gospel reading Jesus gives us a powerful message about how to love each other. He sets the standard of what our love is to be like

with these few words: "love one another, **as I love you.**"

- So we need to begin by asking ourselves: How has Jesus loved me? How is He loving me right now? That's the starting point isn't it? We need to know that love to imitate that love.
- So how has He loved us? Of course there is the love he taught and gave when He lived here among us 2,000 years ago. We can think back on what that was like.
- He didn't require perfection of someone in order to give His love.
- He gave His love to sinners (not the sin); forgiving them, encouraging them.
- He prayed for people.
- He gave His love to everyone, no one was excluded not rich, poor, or outcast. Color, gender, and ethnicity made no difference to Him.
- He gave His love by words and actions. He gave up His life rather than stop loving. These are the ways He loved us.
- We also need to ask ourselves: How is Jesus loving me in this world right now? Think carefully and we will see it.
- He gives us the basics we need to live: food, shelter, works to do. He sends people into our lives who love and care for us. He is there to comfort us, give us courage, healing and hope.
- He is patient with our failings, forgiving us again and again.

- He sends us happiness, laughter, pleasant surprises. He thinks about us, cares for us, listens to us. He draws close and is available for us. He walks with us in difficult times.
- These are the ways Jesus continues to love us today.
- When we spend some time thinking about how Jesus loved us and how He continues to love us, we get a true understanding of the standard He sets for us.
- We come to understand that we are called to love others in these exact same ways. We are to imitate His love and be His love to others.
- When this great love of Jesus pours into our hearts we are changed. We are given the power and the desire to give this same love freely to others, even in the most difficult of situations.
- Because love is the greatest gift and the most powerful weapon. It does have the power to change the world one heart at a time – starting with our own!
- Edith Stein was a young Jewish woman who converted to Christianity and entered a religious order taking the name “Teresa Benedicta of the Cross”. Today we know her as Saint Teresa Benedicta. In 1942 she was arrested and sent to a concentration camp in Nazi Germany. There she preached the love of Christ before being put to death with other “Jewish Christians”.
- I’d like to conclude by reading you the words she wrote shortly before her death. They capture the

essence of today's Gospel reading and what it means to be sent into the world to love one another. They are powerful words to live by especially in today's world. She wrote:

- “ God dwells in each of us and God is love. Therefore we must love each other. Our love for our brothers and sisters is the measure of our love for God. For Christians there are no strangers, only neighbors. It makes no difference if a person is related to us; whether we like them or not; whether we see them as worthy of our help or not. The love of Christ knows no bounds, and it never ceases. It is in us and we must do as He did”.