

April

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another (Jn 13:34).

Jesus said these words just before the beginning of his passion — these words were part of his farewell to his disciples, part of his last will. It is obvious how important they are! If the words a father pronounces on his deathbed can never be forgotten, how should we feel about the words of a man who is God?

Let us take them very seriously and try together to understand them in depth.

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Jesus is about to die, and what he said reflects this. Because of his imminent departure, one problem is foremost in his mind: how can he remain among his own in order to take care of the growing Church? You know that Jesus is present, for example, in sacramental acts: he makes himself present in the Eucharist.

But Jesus is also present wherever there is mutual love. Indeed, he said, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Mt. 18:20).

In this way he can continue to be actively present in a community deeply rooted in mutual love. And through the community, he can continue to reveal himself to the world and make his influence felt. Isn't this wonderful? Doesn't it make you want to start right away living this love together with your fellow Christians? According to St. John, who wrote the words we are now meditating on, mutual love is the foremost commandment of the Church, whose vocation is, in fact, to be communion, to be unity.

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Immediately afterwards Jesus says, ‘By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.’ (Jn 13:35)

So if you want to discover the true mark of authenticity for Christ's disciples, if you want to see their badge, you have to look for it in mutual love. Christians are recognized by this sign. If it is missing, the world will no longer be able to find Jesus in the Church.

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Mutual love creates unity. But what does unity do? Jesus prayed, ‘May they be one ... that the world may believe’ (Jn 17:21). Unity, by revealing Christ's presence, draws the world to follow him. When the world is faced with unity, with mutual love, it believes in Him.

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In this same farewell, Jesus called this commandment “his.”

It is his and is therefore particularly close to his heart.

You should not simply take it as a norm or a rule to follow or just another commandment. Here Jesus wants to reveal a way of life to you. He wants to give you something upon which you can build your life. The first Christians, in fact, placed this commandment at the basis of their lives. As Peter said, ‘Above all, maintain constant love for one another’ (1 Pt 4:8).

Before going to work, before studying, before going to church, before starting any activity, make sure that there is mutual love between you and whoever is with you. If there is, then everything you do is worthwhile. Without this foundation nothing is pleasing to God.

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Jesus also said that this commandment was “new” — “I give you a new commandment.”

Did he mean that this commandment was previously unknown?

No. “New” indicated that it belonged to the “new era.”

But what’s this about? It’s like this. Jesus died for us. Therefore he loved us to the utmost extreme. But what kind of love was his? It certainly wasn’t like ours. His was and is a ‘divine’ love. He said, ‘As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you’ (Jn 15:9). He loved us, therefore, with the very same love with which He and the Father love one another.

We have to love one another with this same love in order to carry out the “new” commandment. However, as human beings, you and I do not possess this kind of love, but happily, as Christians, we have received it. The Holy Spirit has instilled it in our hearts, and in the hearts of all believers.

There is, therefore, an affinity between the Father, the Son and us Christians, because of this unique, divine love which we possess. It is this love that introduces us into the life of the Holy Trinity. It is this love that makes us children of God.

It’s through this love that heaven and earth are linked as by a great current. Through this love the Christian community is brought into the sphere of God and the divine reality dwells on earth where believers love one another.

Doesn't all this seem to you divinely beautiful, and isn't the Christian life utterly fascinating?

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