

*Brothers and sisters, today*, the Church invites us to reflect on the **law of Christ: love one another as I have loved you (Jn. 15:12)**. She urges us to pay attention to what she teaches us. The law of Christ is a Divine law. It is filled with wisdom and gives life to those who are faithful to obey. It is a product of God's love for us. Hence, to obey Divine law, is a fundamental **option for life and happiness**. "**If you love me you will keep my commandments**," says the Lord (John 14:15). This gospel passage is filled with beautiful statements about the ever-popular subject of love. Jesus tells us that the Father loves him, and that he, in turn, loves us, and that we should love one another. Perhaps we have heard these sentiments expressed so often that we no longer realize how profound and dramatic they really are. Loving Jesus, therefore, is not just something emotional; loving Jesus means changing our lives, reforming our lives, working on our personalities and characters, overcoming sinful habits, stretching ourselves to love as Jesus loved. This weekend I wish to express my gratitude to families who have prepared their children beautifully for the First Holy Communion. Yes, receiving Eucharist is to receive God's unconditional love for us. God becomes part of us, really and truly!

Jesus explains in the gospel "as the Father has loved me so I have loved you" (Jn.15:9). He goes ahead to say 'this is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you' (Jn.15:12). Jesus is talking about a very special kind of love, a **sacrificial love**, a love that does not think of oneself, but sacrifices for the sake of the others. In order to make sure that we would not confuse this very special type of love as more lust than love, the writers of the New Testament used a very special word to describe the love of Jesus for us and the love of God for us. They used "**agape**"- a **sacrificial love** for Jesus love for us. Indeed, it is a love that does not think of oneself, but sacrifices for the sake of others. Jesus is a model of showing this sacrificial love, as he said in the gospel today, "**A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends**" (Jn.15:13).

In the second reading today, John says, "let us love one another since love comes from God" (1 John 4:7). John uses the word "**agape**" **for love**; let us love one another with this agape sacrificial love of Jesus because this agape sacrificial love comes from God. Then John says something very challenging. He says, "**Anyone who fails to love can never have known God because God is love**" (1 John 4:8). If we do not love with this agape sacrificial love, we do not know God because God is this agape sacrificial love. We have seen this agape sacrificial love most of all in Jesus on the cross, "A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

The responsorial Psalm has painted a very beautiful image of God's love by saying: the Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power. This revelation of God's saving power to the nation has been exemplified in the first reading. **Guided by the Holy Spirit, Peter understood God's plan of love to save the nations**. As Peter was addressing to the Roman army officer Cornelius and his family, the Holy Spirit came upon them. Now, Peter clearly understood that Jesus has come to save not only the Jews, but pagans as well. He, therefore, ordered that Cornelius and his household should be baptized and even stayed with them for some days, instructing them further on the faith (Acts 10:44-48).

Finally, dear friends, Peter's docility to the Holy Spirit gradually leads him to realize that Jewish forbidding regulations of meat do not apply to Christianity. Peter further explained...God has shown me that I should not call any **man common or unclean** (Acts 10:28). He continues that God shows no partiality... Peter has said it all that where true love exists there is no partiality, no discrimination; love is not rude; love is not quick – tempered. Love is the source of all genuine joys in life. Let us do our best to love in truth and indeed and God will bless us. Amen!