

6TH SUNDAY OF EASTER, C
IF YOU LOVE ME, SHOW IT

"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him." (Jn. 14: 23)

Clara and Claire: Once, there were two good friends: Clara and Claire. Both were daughters of wealthy businessmen, who loved and lavished their surpluses on them. Initially, they loved each other dearly and were very fond of one another. Claire was buxom, beautiful, and elegant. Clara was equally beautiful, athletic, and very stylish. They loved to flaunt what they had. As the relationship progressed in months, Clara was no longer always forthcoming. She was not calling to check on Claire. She was not visiting. She was not even chatting her up. She was withdrawn and cold. Claire noticed this but kept up with calls, visits, and kept extending invitations to her for movies, dinners, and outings. She was hoping that Clara would change and get back to what and how she was at the beginning, or open to her, if there was anything bothering her. This did not happen. So, Claire decided to speak to her about the changes she had observed. Clara did not own up. Instead, she kept saying: "But you know I love you. I really do love you." "How could you love me like this?" Claire answered back. "These attitudes do not show love in any ways. You cannot claim to love me and not check on me, not visit me, not call me, and not chat me up." She went on, "Sometimes, even when I call and chat you up, your responses are very short, insipid and impersonal like someone who doesn't want to be disturbed." Then she added: "If you love me as you claim, show it!" With these she walked away.

Love and Obedience: The words of Claire to her friend, Clara: "If you love me as you claim, show it!" resonates with the challenge of Christ in the Gospel (Jn. 14: 23-29). "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word ..." Here, we see the convergence of love and obedience. The theme of love, which was central last week is repeated here again. Perhaps, to remind us of the crucial role of love in our Christian living. In Johannine theology, love is very central to our understanding of the personality of God. For John, "God is love" (1 John 4: 8). This is what characterises the divine identity and His relationship with us. Love is the foundation and the summit of our relationship: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-Begotten Son, so that whoever believes in Him may not perish but might have eternal life" (John 3: 16). Love is the reason God sent His Son in human form into the world to restore the lost and severed bond. God demonstrated His love for us by doing something, not to please Himself but to

save us. St. Paul captures this vividly: “But God showed His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5: 8). St. John puts it this way: “In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 Jn. 4: 10). The Son came and lived out His life in perfect love of the Father through obedience. His life was nourished only by doing the Father’s Will: “My food is to do the Will of Him Who sent Me, and to accomplish His work” (John 4: 34). Obedience is the truest expression of love. This is what Jesus is inviting us to do: to show our love for Him by obeying and living out His Word. “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” Our love can only be concrete through obedience: “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him” (Jn. 14: 23). Obedience is what unites and sustains our relationship with God, and friendship with Christ. “You are My friends, if you do what I command you to do” (John 15: 14). It is a command as this that informed St. John to exhort us thus: “My children, let us not love with words or with our lips, but in truth and in deed” (1 Jn. 3: 18). Do we love God? How much love do we have, and in what ways do we show it? Jesus is saying to us today: “If you love me as you claim, show it!”

The Power of Love: But there is something deeper and very intriguing as it is exciting in this invitation to love. Jesus says: ““If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, *and My Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him.*” The second part of this invitation expresses the desire of the God the Father and the Son to dwell in us. This is very profound that the divine would seek to dwell in the profane. This shows the power of love. Only love can bring into existence, in the human heart, the One true God, Who is Almighty. St. John makes gives us an insight to this when he said: “God is love. Whoever lives in love, lives in God and God in him” (1 Jn. 4: 16). Man can only realise the reality of his true image through love. The fact is simple, God cannot dwell in a heart; he cannot make His home in a body full of hatred, malice and unforgiveness.

The Promised Advocate: We are 35 days into the Easter Season, and five days away from the Ascension, the time when our Lord Jesus was taken up into heaven and the disciples were left gazing into the sky (Acts 1: 9-11). This was a time of distress and gloom, disappointment, and fear. Jesus knew this would happen hence He told them these things so that when they finally took place they would not be taken aback. He did this to also reassure them that they will never be alone. Similarly, the Church presents us these instructive guidance of Jesus as we prepare for the Ascension and Pentecost. The Holy Spirit, here called

the Advocate, also called the Comforter, the Helper, the Paraclete, the Counsellor, taken from its Greek etymology (parakletos) means *one who positions himself alongside, to support and to comfort*. We are invited to be courageous in the face of all oppositions, for Christ is always with us; and to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who is given to us to “teach” and to “remind” us of all that Christ has taught us and His Church. St. Pope John Paul II said: “At every moment, but especially at the most decisive moments, the Church has to listen to the Spirit. It was so in the Cenacle of Jerusalem, it so happened during the first "council" which opened the doors to the pagans.” This is even more so as we prepare for a synod that invites us to “Communion, Participation and Mission” with emphasis on listening to the Holy Spirit and to one another. This same Spirit guided the apostles, Peter and James, Paul and Barnabas, in the First reading (Acts 15: 1-2,22-29) to amicably resolve the conflict of the early Church, thus opening the doors of the Church to the pagans without imposing any extraneous culture on them. The Church continues in every age to experience conflicts of various dimensions but the Holy Spirit, who is always present guides her ever so wisely. The Church is never alone.

My dear friends, the command to love and obey is not to restrict us but it is an invitation to perfect freedom and peace that the world cannot give (Jn. 14: 27). God has already shown us how much He loves us by sending His Son, we must respond to that love by opening our hearts generously to His loving invitation. It is through such love that the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us, guiding us through our numerous life’s vicissitudes and leading us everlasting peace.