

Easter 6B; Rogation Sunday; Mothers' Day
May 10, 2015

Ken Wratten at St Stephen's, San Jose

1 John 4:7-21 In this is love, that God loved us and sent his Son

John 15:9-17 You did not choose me, but I chose you.

The setting was Jesus' last meal with his friends – the Last Supper.

After supper he started teaching them about the Holy Spirit, who would provide them comfort and strength, and would never leave them. (Jesus said in John 14:16, 'I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever').

Then Jesus told his disciples how much he loved them, and how agape / sacrificial love is at the heart of the new relationship with God. He instructed them to 'abide' in his love, meaning that it is not just a love for them to 'feel', but it is the relationship they – and we – are to center our lives from. The way we ACT in life should be guided and empowered by this relationship of love with our Lord and with God.

Barbara Brown Taylor has written, "God expects us to step up... Knowing God's Word is no substitute for doing it."

So there is a connection for Jesus between his love for God, and his obedience to God; and there is a connection for us between our love for Jesus and our obedience to his commandments. And his commandments are to love one another in the same way that he loved us; we are to love God and love our neighbor; and we are to tell the whole world what he taught.

Acting from this loving bond with Jesus is the reason we had our delightful visit from Sr. Elaine Coutu last week. We learned about how we could help children visit their parents who are in prison – some children seeing their parent for the first time in 2 or 3 years. Our discussion with Sr. Elaine led us to ask her what we can do beyond donating funds. She offered to begin her planning for next year's bus trip this September, and to discuss with us how we can help with preparations for next year's trip. And she has agreed to come back here in July to give us a report on how the bus trip goes on this Fathers' Day in June.

Acting on the loving bond we have with Jesus is the reason we expressed our interest in helping the orphanage that I visited in Matyazo, Tanzania. With Father Fred Kalibwami's relocation away from Matyazo, we had lost contact with the people there. But two days ago I received an email from St. Peter's in Morrow Bay, who started work with Father Fred to purchase an ambulance for the hospital that is part of the Matyazo facility. They have already located a very old four wheel drive vehicle, and want help from us to ship the vehicle to Tanzania. Divine love shows itself in action.

'Abiding in Christ's love' includes acts of sacrificial love when it is hard work. This includes acts of kindness to people who do not treat us with kindness; it includes serving other people when we are too tired or too busy to do things for ourselves. That kind of commitment sounds familiar...

What a great topic for Mothers' Day: don't you think?

This concept of abiding in God's love illustrates the love a mom has for her children; and it is a relationship I learned best from my mother. As an adult studying Scriptures, I see how Jesus pushes that relationship to a level beyond my own family, and beyond being nice to people. But the kind of person we were taught to be by the person who provided mothering care – whether they were biological mothers or not – those lessons shape us to be who we have become.

Share with your mother – or another who gave you mothering care – the acts of self-giving love you experienced through them.

God loves Jesus as a father loves a Son.

That is the same measure for how much Jesus loves us,

Jesus kept the Father's commandments, and abides (lives) in God's love.

We keep Jesus' commandments, and abide in (not just with) Jesus' love.

Jesus commandment is: love each other as much as Jesus loved us.

Through your obedience in giving sacrificial love, Jesus makes you his friend. And he strengthens, comforts, and accompanies you with his Spirit abiding in you for eternity.

Amen.