

TO LIVE IS TO LOVE: 6TH SUNDAY EASTER B

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'Remain in my love,' Jesus says to us today. But that's not all. *'If you keep my commandments, he goes on, 'you will remain in my love.' 'What commandments?' we may well ask. His answer gives us that commandment that keeps us close to him and connected to him. It also sums up the meaning of life for us. That's to live in a loving relationship with him personally and with everyone else in our lives.*

So, if we are to go out from church every Sunday and make this world a better place for our presence, we've just got to live and keep on living his number one requirement: *'Love one another, as I have loved you.'*

That's it! Simple but difficult! Impossible, in fact, without him! For without his example, and without the help and strength he offers, it's just not possible to be loving, caring, helpful and forgiving persons all the time. Without him, without his example and presence, we may even degenerate into self-centred, indifferent, nasty and callous human beings.

In a nursing home the residents were gathered in the chapel for the celebration of Sunday Mass. One old woman, wheel-chair bound, was wearing two hats. A carer from the home tried to take one off, but the woman clung tightly to her two hats. The carer saw that in her efforts to tidy up the situation, she was now defeated. So she backed off, and let the old lady be. What took over was the carer's respect, care and concern for the old lady.

Perhaps that old lady, like the old-time prophets, was acting out a message to the gathered group. Perhaps she was saying: *'You all should wear two hats, that of your own individual self – as Brian, Ann, Bob, Carol, Tim, Stephanie, Tony, whatever - but also what you are as a follower of Jesus - i.e. as "another Christ".'*

Speaking of Holy Communion, St Augustine in the 400s in North Africa, said many wise and wonderful things about who we are as members, cells, and limbs of the body of Christ. Among other things he said: *'You are what you have received.'* In fact the first of the signs in which we receive Jesus is the sign of bread. In the course of digestion, the bread and the person eating it become one. The bread is assimilated into the body of the person eating. When we receive him as the Bread of Life for our journey of life, we become more and more one with him. But there's a difference. Christ is not changed into us, into our bodies. No, we are assimilated into Christ's body. We are assimilated into that extension of himself which is the body of Christians in the world today, his Church.

Profound implications follow for living our communion, our being joined and bonded to Christ and one another in love. What is involved could hardly be better put than in the famous Prayer of St Francis. Let us pray it now:

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.*

*O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console,
To be understood as to understand,
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
It is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life. AMEN.*

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