

A “New” Commandment?

*Fr. Michael Joly, giving our Easter Mission, preached at all the Masses this weekend. If you want to hear it, please go to our website. [Fr. Mike]

Intro. When going a trip – across town or across the world – we usually do some planning. When I run a series of errands, I could just try to remember everything; that is not always successful. So, I make a list of the places and items needed at each. I have also begun plotting the most efficient route not only to save time, but these days, gas as well. Today’s gospel is one item on the Lord’s long trip list for his disciples.

I. The Last Supper must have been a long one because John wrote five chapters about the conversation the Lord had with his disciples. Most of it is about the Lord’s reminders for his apostles to

follow after he is gone. He didn’t tell them *where* he was going; that would have only distracted them from his purpose which was to prepare them for the mission. The “new” commandment was to love differently than they were used to. It meant to love more than their immediate family, their tribe and their fellow Jews. This love was to be extended to the people the Lord loved – tax collectors, sinners, lepers and other people who live on the margins of society. In effect: to love everyone. If we love each other the way usually do, no one will *ever* know any of us are his disciples. We “love” others depending on who they are to us. The “new” was defined by his words, “*as I have loved you.*” The Lord loves *selflessly, without conditions*; he forgives and is merciful. Even when we don’t deserve it. For us, this is definitely not an easy love.

Concl. The Scottish biblical scholar, William Barclay, commenting on the Lord's new commandment wrote, "Sometimes we make the mistake of thinking that love is meant to give us happiness. In the end it does, but love may well bring pain and demand a cross." [W. Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, Volume 2, Revised Edition, (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1975) p.150]

Love opens us to the possibility of joy and pain. To love like the Lord does will bring pain and misunderstanding as disciples learn. It also brings incredible joy. **Our mission trip instruction is to**

love as the Lord loves us. Selflessly. That will make us really stand out in a world that doesn't seem to know how to do that.

Fr. Michael Pendergraft
Fifth Sunday, Easter, 2022