

VI SUNDAY OF EASTER- 6th MAY 2018

GREATER LOVE HAS NO ONE THAN THIS, THAT SOMEONE LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS --- Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OMS

John 15, 9-17

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servant for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

Love is not transmitted through doctrine, but only through gestures that communicate life. For this, after he had invited his disciples to gather much fruit to become his disciples, Jesus states “*As the Father has loved me,*” the Father had loved the son communicating his spirit, all his capacity to love “*...so have I loved you.*” Jesus speaks of the past. When it is that Jesus had loved? In the washing of the feet, the evangelist says that Jesus had brought the maximum of his capacity of love and he had transformed it into a service to raise the status of those that considered themselves servants. And he asks for the first time “*Abide in my love.*” Service freely exercised out of love, voluntarily, is the only guarantee of remaining in the love of the Lord.

Then Jesus continues “*If you keep my commandments,*.” Jesus in reality had left one commandment that he had called new because it was better, it replaces the others. But why does Jesus talk of commandments when to command the only thing that cannot be commanded, is love? Service, submission and obedience can be commanded but not love. Just to oppose it to the commandments of Moses. There is a single commandment, that which is love that becomes service, then after the practical,

infinite implementations of this single commandment has for Jesus the same value of the other commandments.

Therefore *“If you keep my commandments you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.”* So, there is again the characteristic language of John, of this dynamic love, love received and love communicated. Jesus continues *“These things I have spoken to you,”* to what is Jesus referring? The Father's care for his vineyard. Jesus had assured that if there is any negative element in the life of the disciple it is the Father who thinks of eliminating it. *“These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you,..”* for the first time Jesus speaks of his joy, therefore the joy of man with the divine condition. *“..and that your joy may be full.”* Then further on, in chapter 16, Jesus will say *“... that your joy may be full.”* (v.24) The joy of the believer is his characteristic, the joy of feeling loved, a joy that multiplies to the extent that one is able to share it. The invitation to the fullness of joy is enclosed between the two invitations to the observance of the commandment. And Jesus continues *“This is my commandment,”* Jesus underlines that they are not Moses' commandments *“... that you love one another as I have loved you.”* Jesus again underlines the importance of service. *“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”* What Jesus has said, he will do. At the moment of the arrest it will be him that offers his life for his own. It is not a final act in the life of an individual or of Jesus, but all ones existence is orientated for the wellbeing of mankind.

Then for the first time Jesus calls his disciples friends., saying *“You are my friends if you do what I command you.”* So the commandment of love that manifests itself in service renders friends of Jesus. Then here one reads *“No longer do I call you servant...”* but Jesus has never called his disciples servants! Here the Greek expression is emphatic and could be translated “no, I have never called you servants” because the servant does not know what the master does, but I have called you friends. In the gospel Lazarus is called the friend of Jesus. Jesus who has not come to be served, but to serve does not have need of servants, but friends. Friends means those who share and collaborate in the realization of the Father's project.

“No longer do I call you servant for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.” therefore again the sharing of the creation project. And then Jesus concludes *“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit..”* to bear fruit the Christian community must go, the community of followers of Jesus must not wait for people to come, but must go. Where to? To the marginalized, to the unseen, to the despised people, *“..that your fruit should abide,”*

Why? And here is the assurance of Jesus, “*..whatever you ask the Father in my name,*”

In my name does not mean the formula, “for Christ our Lord”. In the name in the Jewish culture means the similarity, in identification with Jesus, “*..he may give it to you,*” the Father offers to his children his own strength of love. Therefore when the Father sees the son that orientates his life for the good of others continually he transmits always a greater energy of love,

And the passage concludes again with the invitation of Jesus “*These things I command you*” so the only commandment in the community of believers, , “*..so that you will love one another.*” and this love, Jesus has told us, manifests itself in service.