

VI SUNDAY AFTER EASTER– 9th May 2021

GREATER LOVE HAS NO ONE THAN THIS, THAT SOMEONE LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS. – Biblical Commentasry by Father Alberto Maggi OSM

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 servants, 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.

The hallmark of the Christian is joy and Jesus also tells us why; let's read chapter 15 of John's Gospel, where Jesus continues teaching, beginning from verse 9. Jesus states *“As the Father has loved me,..”* Jesus was loved by the Father through the gift of Spirit, his own ability to love as the Lord, *“..so have I loved you.”* How has Jesus loved his disciples? In chapter 13, the scene of the washing of the feet, the evangelist presents it like this *“...having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.”* and how did he love them? By washing their feet, because love is not a feeling, but a service, it is not transmitted through a doctrine, but through gestures that communicate life. And Jesus asks *“Abide in my love”*, what does this mean? Service is the only guarantee of love, of being in communion with the Father.

“If you keep my commandments,..” here Jesus speaks of commandments, in the plural, but in the washing of the feet Jesus spoke of a commandment that he called "new", not in the sense that he added to those of Moses, those that already exist, but for a quality that is completely new. And what was this commandment? Of mutual love as Jesus had loved his own through the service of washing their feet. So *“If you keep my commandments..”* what does he mean? There is only one commandment, that of mutual love, the practical and concrete answer to this single commandment has a value for Jesus as all the other commandments. *“...abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.”* love that becomes service is the only guarantee of the communion of Jesus with the Father and of us with the Father and Jesus. Jesus states *“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you,..”*. Jesus inserts this teaching on joy in the middle of the two teachings on love. *“..that my joy may be in you..”* the joy of Jesus which is the joy of God be in you and *“..that your joy may be full.”* So the believer's hallmark is joy, a joy that does not depend on the events of life, today everything is fine with me, I am happy and tomorrow things maybe will be bad and I am not happy, but it depends not only on feeling loved, but on

feeling the fruit of a plan of love on the part of the Father and it is the Father himself who takes care and protects this plan of love.

And Jesus insists *“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”* He insists on speaking of the past, it is not a promise for the future *“as I will love you”* but *“as I have loved you”*. that is, the washing feet and again insists and we too insist that service is the only guarantee of communion with the Lord.

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends”. Those of Jesus are not words, they are not resolutions, but they are facts. At the time of Jesus' arrest he could save himself and instead gave his life for his own people, he told the guards *“I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go.”* (John18,8) And then Jesus affirms something surprising for the culture of the time; at that time the relationship between the teacher and the disciples was a relationship between a lord and his servants, instead Jesus states *“You are my friends...”* The relationship with Jesus is not that of servants, Jesus does not need servants because it is he who puts himself at the service of men and humanity, but he has need of people who collaborate with him and are like him in this service. Of course this friendship is conditioned by *“...if you do what I command you.”* that is, if you put into practice this mutual love.

Jesus proceeds *“ You did not choose me, but I chose you...”* Even Paul, in the letter to the Ephesians says that even before the creation of the world the Lord had chosen us because he needs each of us to manifest himself in a new, original and creative form, *“..and appointed you that you should go..”* here is a verb of movement. The Christian community is not an immobile and static community, waiting for people to come, but it is a dynamic community, in movement , which goes towards whom? It goes towards the rejected people, to the excluded, the marginalized of society to bear fruit and to communicate their love to them. *“ and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name,”* in the name of Jesus *“..he may give it to you.”* because the Father, seeing us resembling the Son, it is in his interest to grant us all that is needed to bear more and more fruit.