

**ST PAUL'S (RONDEBOSCH)
SERMON (YEAR B)
SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
9 MAY 2021 (MOTHER'S DAY)**

READINGS: ACTS 10:44-48 // PSALM 98// 1JOHN 5:1-6// JOHN 15:9-17

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Let us pray

O God the light of the minds that know you. Life of the souls that love you and strength of the thoughts that seek you Bless the words of my lips and the meditations of our hearts AMEN

A little girl asked her mother, "How did the human race start?"

The mother answered, "God made Adam and Eve, they had children and so all of humankind was made."

The little girl walked away, but two days later she asked her father the same question.

The Father answered, "Many years ago there were monkeys from which the human race evolved."

The confused girl returned to her mother and said, "Mom, how is it possible that you told me the human race was created by God, and Dad said they developed from monkeys?"

The mother answered, "It is very simple. Both are true... I told you about my side of the family and your Father told you about his."

Happy Mother's Day! Moms always seem to have the right answers. No worry men and fathers, we have more to say about this come Father's Day!

There's no one who wants to see love, unity and closeness in the family more than a mother. Our Gospel reading for today it is the love of a parent for a child that serves as the comparison for God's relationship to Jesus. Jesus' prayer is for that same love, unity and closeness for those who believe his message.

Our reading from John's gospel this morning picks up precisely where last week's reading left off.

The abiding relationship of vine and branches of last Sunday's lesson, which culminates in the bearing of much fruit, is now given further description in terms of love.

In this morning's Gospel reading the word *love* appears nine times.

The Greeks have three words for love:

- **Eros**, romantic or sexual love.
- **Philos (philia)**, a companionate love –refers to friendship //love for brother or sister
- **Agape**, a love characterized by concern for the welfare of the other person. The agape love is used to speak of God’s love that is most commonly used in the New Testament

This morning I would like us to reflect on the relationship of love and commandments in today’s Gospel text when we honour and value mothers who have loved, nurtured, and taught us so profoundly.

There are three statements I want to highlight.

Firstly

Jesus says” As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. My command is this Love each other as I have loved you.”

This is the love relationship between God and Jesus (Father and son// Parent and child)

The heavenly Father (God) gave his son Jesus an infinite sense of belonging and being rooted in his love. “***You are my beloved son in whom I am well pleased***”, we hear the blessing spoken at the time of his baptism. God gave Jesus a firm foundation... the conviction of His Presence, his counsel and his faithfulness in times of trial and temptation. Jesus received from God (His heavenly Father) a peace that far transcends the restlessness of this world. The Father’s love assured him of a sense of security and safety in a cruel world.

Furthermore Jesus says: Now remain in my love. What does it mean to “remain” in Jesus’ love? The Greek word *meno* means dwelling in a particular place—remaining there—abiding there. It suggests the kind of peace and stability that we associate with being at home (With a mother’s love) When used of relationships, as it is here, *meno* suggests steadfast relationship—heart and soul unity. To remain in Jesus’ love, then, suggests being immersed in Jesus’ love—surrounded by Jesus’ love—comforted by Jesus’ love—empowered by Jesus’ love, when we go through difficult times

This is also the love we get from our parents especially our mother, that firm foundation, that sense of belonging, that comfort, that security and safety in a cruel world

The second statement I want to highlight is in v 13-15

“Greater love has no one than this that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his masters business. Instead I call you friends for everything I have learned from my father I have made known to you”

This is the love relationship between Jesus and his disciples

This is a sacrificial love because Jesus love his disciples and us so much that he laid down his life for us and took them and us into a covenant of friendship with himself

Disciples of the first century Jews were their rabbi’s servants. They waited on their masters. Jesus is saying that His relationship with his disciples is more than a servant but that of a friend.

Jesus is getting at the intimacy of our relationship with Him. He does not treat us like the world treats their servants. He treats us like friends. He shares the things that are really on his heart, everything he learned from the father. *Friends have our best interests in mind, just like Jesus does. Friends will be with us in good times and bad times just like Jesus is. They help us to expand our world, expose us to new and creative possibilities, and sustain us when we are in need.* For many of us, mom is or was a best friend, someone we could always go to for answers, encouragement, and support. Mom is someone we trust, respect and listen to when in need of strength. For some of us, moms or other women in our life, have been the guiding force, the light that helped us find our way in the world, find our footing, find our faith

There ***third*** statement I want to highlight is in v 12 and 17

“My command is this Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this that he lay down his life for his friends.

This is the love relationship between us as Jesus’ disciples

The love Jesus is talking about is the kind that gives of itself completely and utterly, without hope or expectation of receiving anything at all in return. It is

ready to give even at the risk of its own life, its own welfare. And that is what we are called to, as followers of Jesus. ***“Love one another, as I have loved you.”***

The *agape* love that Jesus commands is more a “doing” than a “feeling” word. It doesn’t require that we approve of the actions of the person whom we love—or even that we enjoy their company. It does require that we act in behalf of that person—to demonstrate our love in some practical fashion. An *agape* person will do what is possible to feed the hungry—and to give drink to the thirsty—and to welcome the stranger—and to clothe the naked—and to visit the sick and the person in prison (Matthew 25:31-46). The *agape* person has little or nothing to gain by helping these hungry, thirsty, strange, naked, imprisoned people. The thrust of his/her *agape* love is giving, not getting.

We have to love, not half-heartedly or occasionally or only when it benefits us, we have to love as he loves us, fully and fiercely and unselfishly. Jesus calls us to abide in his love, and to love others the way he loves us, with a spirit of forgiveness and compassion and encouragement. He knows our sins and our fears and our weaknesses, all of it, and he loves us still. He loves us better than we love ourselves. Let us abide in his love, and let us strive to share that love with one another.

A mother’s love is also sacrificial in the sense that they will love us unconditionally and will do nearly anything for their families.

Conclusion

Let me illustrate this point with the following story.

On Tuesday the 4 May we celebrated and commemorated “Saint Monica”

“Monica was a Christian woman of North Africa whose devout faith is immortalised in her son’s book. The confessions of St Augustine. As a young man Augustine caused his mother great sorrow as he rejected her Church and sought self-fulfilment in the rival cults and philosophies of the day. She pursued him with her prayer and when he crossed to Italy, followed him there in person until in old age she had the joy of seeing her son come back to the Christian faith. When Monica knew that her death was near, she tried to comfort her son. “Son for my part I no longer find joy in the world. One thing there was for which I desired remain in this life a little longer that I should see you a Catholic Christian before I died. And when her son promised to carry her body back to Africa for burial she forbade him “It does not matter where you bury my body,

do not let that worry you. All I ask of you is that wherever you may be you should remember me at the altar of the Lord”

Mother’s prayers (not only biological//guardians//aunts//grandmothers /men//fathers who plays the role as mom and dad) make a difference in our world. Mothers are always seeking unity, close family relationships, peace and love to reign in our lives. Just like Jesus, who prayed for us!

We give thanks to all women and men today for that deep love; a unifying love, an abiding love that brings us together as family, as community, and as a church