

“LOVE ONE ANOTHER, AS I LOVE YOU”

There's an old song that begins, "I love you a bushel and a peck, a bushel and a peck, and a hug around the neck..." Most songs sing of newly found or long-established love and the desire to have it returned in volume and intensity. Few are the songs that declare life-long love, expecting no return or being satisfied if that love moves on.

The love between the Father and the Son is presented as the model. This love comes from the Father, is accepted by Jesus in full freedom, and then spread to others.

In the First Reading today we see that God doesn't show favoritism. Peter is embarrassed by the way Cornelius greets him. The world saw these two men as natural enemies, and it's Peter's job to declare them friends, both equally deserving of the Good News. It wasn't Peter's idea to reach out beyond the Jews, but God draws unlikely people together. The make-up of my home, my school, my work-place is a collage of varying personalities. Do I move about in my life as a Peter, willing to accept and even love them all? Today's church, just as in Peter's day, is an odd assortment of saints and sinners. Whether or not the person in the pew in front of me holds my same values and depth of faith, he/she is a favorite of God's as much as I am.

Second Reading - "God sent his only Son into the world that we might have life through him." The story of the incarnation makes most of us feel tender-hearted at Christmas time. But after the crib is boxed away, we are faced with the realization that there was a purpose for Jesus being sent into the world. What are we supposed to do to respond to this gift of Jesus? It would be nice to respond to Jesus by focusing on our own relationship with Him. But the directive is to "love one another, because love is of God." The incarnation was not an isolated moment in history, but the beginning of a chain of events that continues in every generation. We are to become like Peter, looking beyond any histories that keep us distant and aloof from the poor, small, old, suffering, foreign, guilty, or different, setting no limits on our care and love.

Third Reading - "You are my friends if you do what I command you." Jesus knows our love is far from perfect, but he still invites us into friendship with him. He does this even though he knows that he is a better friend to us than we will ever be in return. Jesus says that we can't have human life without love. And he lets us know that the love we experience from him must be shared, must be passed on. He has commanded that it be so.

Everyone is invited to share in the love that exists between the Father and the Son. Everyone is invited to welcome the Holy Spirit into our lives to further that love.

Realizing that we all share in the incomprehensible love of the Father and Son, let us move to the Table of the Lord to share that love more fully with each other.

God is love.....1 John 4:7-10