HOMILY by Fr. Anthony Davis

"Love one another as I have loved you"

May 19, 2019
5th Sunday of Easter (Year C)
Acts 14:21-27; Rv. 21:1-5a; Jn 13:31-35

Today's readings are about renewal and new things: The New Jerusalem, a new Heaven and a new earth, and a new commandment. Today's Gospel passage gives us the secret of Christian renewal as the faithful practice of Jesus' new commandment**: "Love one another as I have loved you"**. Jesus has added a new element to the Old Testament command of love by teaching us that the true test of discipleship is to love other people in the same way that he has loved us, with sacrificial, unconditional, **"Agápe Love"- a love that requires total commitment and trust. It is the kind of love with which God loves us, a love that should be the model of the love we have for others. This love should be more than just a warm feeling toward others; it should be a compassionate gift of ourselves to meet the spiritual and bodily needs of our brothers and sisters.**

STORY: "**I wouldn't do that for a million dollars.**" One day, as St. Teresa of Calcutta and her Missionaries of Charity were tending to the poorest of the poor on the streets of Calcutta, they happened across a man lying in the gutter, very near death. He was filthy, dressed in little more than a rag and flies swarmed around his body. Immediately, Mother Teresa embraced him, spoke to him softly and began to pick out the maggots that were nesting in his flesh. A passerby was repulsed by the sight of the man and exclaimed to Mother Teresa, **"I wouldn't do that for a million dollars."** Her response was immediate, **"Neither would I!"** *Obviously, monetary gain did not motivate the diminutive woman known as the Saint of Calcutta; love did.*

In her writings, Mother Teresa frequently affirmed the motivating power of love. **Quoting Jesus in today's Gospel, she wrote, "Jesus said, 'Love one another. Such as my love has been for you, so must your love be for each other.'" She continued, "We must grow in love, and to do this we must go on loving and loving and giving and giving until it hurts - the way Jesus did. *Do ordinary things with extraordinary love: little things, like caring for the sick and the homeless, the lonely and the unwanted, washing and cleaning for them."***

Elsewhere, Mother Teresa remarked that the greatest disease in the **West today is not tuberculosis, leprosy or even A.I.D.S.; it is being unwanted, uncared for,**

unloved. That she did her part in trying to **"cure" this disease was attested in everything she did and in every word she said.**

 Conclusion: Hence, the renewal of Christian life means a radical change of vision and a reordering of our priorities in life. Such a renewal brings us to embrace new attitudes, new values and new standards of relating to God, to other people and, indeed, to our whole environment. This means when we are assembled as a religious or social community, we have an opportunity to demonstrate our love for one another.

People must see Christians as people who interact with a love and concern for one another that reveals their strong love and appreciation for each other. They should see in us a quickness to appreciate and readiness to forgive, even as Christ has forgiven us. We love others by responding to their everyday needs with love and compassion.

For instance, we love others by comforting and protecting those who have experienced loss. We love others by serving others in every possible way no matter how small, seeing the face of Jesus in them. We love others by forgiving rather than condemning, by challenging rather than condoning.

Finally, we love others by sacrificially sharing our time, talents and blessings with them. Indeed, n**ot only is this a new commandment, but also, Jesus teaches, it is the greatest. To love, in fact, is to know God—"Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:7-8). And so today Jesus says, "Love one another. Such as my love has been for you, so must your love be for each other."**