



## PARISH OF ST. AGATHA 1

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Jesus I Trust in You

### POPE FRANCIS: ABIDE IN MY LOVE BY KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS

In this Sunday's Gospel passage (Jn 15:9-17) after having compared Himself to the vine and us to the branches, last week Jesus, explains what fruit is borne by those who remain united to Him: this fruit is love. He again repeats the key-verb: abide. He invites us to abide in his love so that his joy may be in us and our joy may be full (vv. 9-11). To abide in Jesus' love. Let us ask ourselves: what this love is in which Jesus tells us to abide to have his joy? What is this love? It is the love that originates in the Father, because "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8). This love of God, of the Father, flows like a river in his Son Jesus and through Him comes to us, his creatures. Indeed, he says: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you" (Jn 15:9). The love Jesus gives us is the same with which the Father loves Him: pure love, unconditional, freely given love. It cannot be bought, it is free. By giving it to us, Jesus treats us like friends – with this love –, making us know the Father, and he involves us in his same mission for the life of the world.

And then, we can ask ourselves the question, how do we abide in this love? Jesus says: "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love" (v. 10). Jesus summarised his commandments in a single one, this: "that you love one another as I have loved you" (v. 12). To love as Jesus means to offer yourself in service, at the service of your brothers and sisters, as he did in washing the feet of the disciples. It also means going outside of ourselves, detaching ourselves from our own human certainties, from earthly comforts, in order to open ourselves up to others, especially those in greater need. It means making ourselves available, as we are and with what we have. This means to love not in word but in deeds.

To love like Christ means saying 'no' to other 'loves' that the world offers us: love of money – those who love money do not love as Jesus loves –, love of success, vanity, [love] of power.... These deceptive paths of "love" distance us from the Lord's love and lead us to become more and more selfish, narcissistic, overbearing. And being overbearing leads to a degeneration of love, to the abuse others, to making our loved ones suffer. I am thinking of the unhealthy love that turns into violence – and how many women are victims of violence these days. This is not love. To love as the Lord loves us means to appreciate the people beside us, to respect their freedom, to love them as they are, not as we want them to be, gratuitously. Ultimately, Jesus asks us to abide in his love, to dwell in his love, not in our ideas, not in our own self-worship. Those who dwell in self-worship live in the mirror: always looking at themselves. Those who overcome the ambition to control and manage others. Not controlling, serving them. Opening our heart to others, this is love, giving ourselves to others.

Dear brothers and sisters, where does this abiding in the Lord's love lead? Where does it lead us? Jesus told us: "That my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (v. 11). And the Lord wants the joy he possesses, because he is in complete communion with the Father, to be in us insofar as we are united to Him. The joy of knowing we are loved by God despite our infidelities enables us to face the trials of life confidently, makes us live through crises so as to emerge from them better. Our being true witnesses consists in living this joy, because joy is the distinctive sign of a true Christian. True Christians are not sad; they always have that joy inside, even in difficult moments. May the Virgin Mary help us to abide in Jesus' love and to grow in love for everyone, witnessing to the joy of the Risen Lord.

### THE MARK OF A CHRISTIAN IS JOY!

The Commandments of God are seen by many Christians as an obstacle for having a good time and living their lives to the full - according to their own earthly commandments. In truth, they do not know what living one's life to the full means. In today's Gospel (Jn 15:9-17), Jesus tells us that He has come to complete our Joy. He has come to earth to establish the Kingdom of Eternal Joy and Love in our hearts. These will come to completion in Heaven. But, to experience the grace of this divine joy, here on earth, God gives us Heavenly Commandments that are meant to awaken True Love and Joy in our lives. They are not to be viewed as commands to spoil our joy but as true Knowledge to assist us to get from this passing world to a world of Joy that will never end.

### JOY IS THE FRUITS OF THE COMMANDMENTS

Jesus reveals the link between Joy and the Commandments today. To Love one another, will lead to great joy in the world, as is practiced and exercised in Heaven. The Divine Laws, Commandments, and demands of the Church are all designed to make us more adept at giving ourselves away in love. God's Commandments are not to be adhered to with a bitterness and a sour face, but should be seen as our Way to Joy and Love in this life and the next. If we could grasp God's unconditional love for us, life would be a journey of joy. Joy can even be present in our hardships and trials. Jesus' joy is profound and deep, even in His Passion. It is the joy of being loved by the Father. Our joy must spring from an awareness that I am loved by God, who is my heavenly Father.

### LOVE WITH GOD'S LOVE

Joy should be our corner stone, symbolising Christ, and in turn, we are commanded to align this Joy with each other, through Love. The hinge of a door enables it to function and be of service to others as a door. Our vocations should be hinged on God's Love, in order for us function as true Christians and be at the service of love to each other. Like a door without a hinge, we become useless in God's eyes. Always be open to the Love God has given us and extend it to others. Open the door of faith in our hearts. Close the door of selfishness, ego, arrogance, violence, impatience, impurity, pride and all sin, which extinguishes the fire of God's Love in all our hearts. The Gospel instructs us in the way of loving others with God's Love.

### COMMANDMENTS OF LOVE

Jesus didn't give us the Commandments to control and dominate us against our will but to offer them as Ways to true happiness and eternal joy in Heaven. Jesus says: "I am the Way". It is important we see this, especially if it is our real intention to go to Heaven, and live under these Divine Commandments. Jesus' sole intention is that: "My Joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete". The mark of a true Christian then surely is Joy. Love spends itself for another by profiting our neighbour. Only love lasts as a motive for any good we want to do. Jesus knows that and links love and joy. Prayer nourishes love, and is at the service of love, the greatest of God's gifts. To prove our love and belief in God then we must live by the Commandments of God. Jesus says: "If you keep My commandments you will remain in My love". This obviously means that if we do not keep His Commandments then we reject His Love and helping Hand to get us to Heaven.

### WE ARE MADE OF LOVE

We, as Christians are planted in love and built on love. Love casts out fear and frees us from anxiety and distress, which are friends of the devil. God's love calls us for a response of faith in Jesus. This faith results in making the Truth part of one's life, one's living. To refuse faith is to be self-condemned. Love is the fruit of our Faith. To have no faith is to have no true generous love in us. Love is the source of all good things and it is an impregnable defence. It is the means that leads to Heaven. If we walk in love, then we will not go astray or ever be afraid. Love guides us, protects us, and brings us to our journey's end. Christ made love the stairway that would enable all Christians to climb to Heaven, because God is Love. Jesus is not asking, but commanding that we love one another and then when we ask for an intention, He will give us anything we ask Him in His Holy Name. Let us radiate the Joy of Christ! Continued Easter Blessings. Fr. Brendan.