

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Personally Chosen Fifth Week of Easter Friday, May 19, 2017 7:30 PM
Acts 15:22-31; **Jn 15:12-17** (It's God and/in the Holy Spirit loving us, calling us friends,
making us friends, putting us on equality with God.)

“This is my commandment: love one another as I love you.”

Now about a month ago we celebrated Easter; and a few days leading up to Easter we had Holy Thursday, in which we commemorated the Last Supper, and then on Friday the crucifixion, and then Holy Saturday the descent into hell gathering up the lost, and then Easter on Sunday. But this is the whole mystery of Christ, the Paschal Mystery, how this changes life, changes everything. And **we really can't deal with the whole Paschal Mystery in three days or four days or a week.**

So now we are reading from the Gospel of John. These are the **Farewell Discourses of Jesus**. These are, at least John's version of, Jesus' parting words. They are quite extraordinary, and **they help us to understand what the Cross was for Jesus, at least as it was filtered through the beloved disciple through the power of the Holy Spirit**. Of course the Spirit always has to be working in us, in the authors, in the Church, in the community. **The Holy Spirit is always at work because without the Holy Spirit there is nothing.**

So here Jesus is talking about the real love that he has for his friends and the fact that **his love elevates their ministry to a level of real friendship**. “I call you no longer slaves.” A disciple really was a slave. A disciple did the laundry, did the wash, did the cooking, took care of the personal needs of the master. But Jesus says, no, no, I really want to take care of you; I don't want you to take care of me. So on this very night of the Last Supper **he washes their feet**. This is trading places. This is doing the unspeakable, but that's what the whole life of Jesus is about, the unspeakable. And what Christian faith tells us is that **Jesus really is God trying to enter into our hearts and minds and let us know the real nature, the real being of God, what God is really like**. Human beings have never come up with very good ideas about God. Human beings imagine God to be like a great king or like a powerful potentate or like a great general or a judge or a ruler or something else. Jesus is trying to help us get rid of and let go of those categories that our human society and civilization have given us and bring something totally fresh.

In this discourse he is saying I have come, **God has come to earth to serve you**, as preposterous as that actually sounds at first, but that's his intention. Now I have done that so that

you being touched by this love will do the same for others. That is actually God's plan for the salvation of the world, that **he touched some people with his love that will so change them, transform them that they go and touch others and so on, so that it spreads.** So Jesus says, "I have told you everything I've heard from my Father." Of course they forgot most of it. But the point is he shared himself totally. He didn't hold back. And that's what he wants to do for us; he wants to share himself totally. He is not saying, well, you are not really smart enough. Well, you are not really holy enough. You're not moral enough. You're not righteous enough or anything else. He doesn't say that. **He wants to share himself totally with you,** so that at the core of your life you know how good everything is, how good God is, how good you are, how good life is, in spite of all kinds of evidence to the contrary, because the evidence is now coming from inside, from the Holy Spirit. And it's much more powerful than anything you can simply see or hear or deduce with your mind. This is much more powerful, more direct. **It's God in the Holy Spirit loving us, calling us friends, making us friends, putting us on equality with God.**

Now here's a weird thing. It says in Philippians that "Jesus, Son though he was, did not deem equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied himself." Why did he do that? **He emptied himself to fill us, to bring us to his level of divinity.** This is what St. Thomas says: "The Word became flesh, became human, so that humanity can become divine." We need to really think about that. That's what is happening here. And of course he wants his disciples to feel that **they have been personally picked. "It was not you who chose me; it is I who chose you."**

Do you feel that you're here tonight because you were chosen to be here? That's what this means. God wanted you to be here to experience something very special. And we are not just here tonight for our own well-being. **We are here tonight so that we can go bear fruit that will remain.** And we can; it comes from the Holy Spirit. Not only that, but **"whatever we ask then the Father in Jesus' name," meaning when it is exactly what Jesus would want himself, "the Father will give it to us."** The Father is not going to turn his Son down. But we go right into his place and stand in his place when we take on his life, when we take on his life of service, and his life of love, a love that is so strong that it gives itself away for the beloved. If we really are in that place, then whatever we ask will be granted. And it won't be for any sort of special stuff in this world, because **when we are in that place, we won't want any special stuff in this world.** "This I command you: love one another."