

Homily for 6th Sunday of Easter

I came across this recently:-

But is it true love?

Dearest Jimmy,

No words could ever express the great unhappiness I've felt since breaking our engagement. Please say you will take me back. No one could ever take your place in my heart, so please forgive me. I love you, I love you, I love you!

Yours forever,

Marie

(PS And congratulations on winning the lottery.)

Motive?

I wonder, have you ever seen someone holding a sign saying:- John 3:16?

At every Olympic games, World Cup, Wimbledon, sometimes even Test Matches, and lots of other events you will see someone holding a sign that says:- John 3:16

Why? What do they mean?

Well John 3 :16 says:-

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

I say:- "Well done" to all the people who manage to get that message across!

It seems the whole Gospel of John is about the love of God.

It's about the love that is shown or if you like "revealed" to us in Jesus and in this verse - 3 v 16 John spells it out.

"For God so loved the world"

Perhaps our theme today is to look at how that unconditional love of God needs a response from us. I don't mean as a church but individually.

For each of us on our own.

I believe God wants us to love him, in the same way that he loves us. Now that needs some thinking about! (That's your homework for this week!!)

Perhaps we need to remember that God won't force himself on us. We have the freedom to accept that love, to ignore it, or even to reject it. As Christians we may feel we don't deserve that love, and even though we may feel totally inadequate, we still accept it as a freewill gift from God.

Because we are blessed by that love of God then Love becomes more important than the law. By that I mean we live the way we do because the love of God changes the way we think, act and do! We don't live our lives according to a set of rules

but according to what it is right and just and grounded in love. The love of God.

If we don't have love in our hearts then we are unlikely to do what God would want us to do.

Remember how Jesus says:-

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."
That means that if you live in love then you will do what the rules say without even thinking about them.

St Augustine of Hippo understood all about this when he said:-

"Love God and do what you will."

I like that!

"Love God and do what you will."

He knew that if we love God then we wouldn't do anything to offend him.

We all know that if we say we love someone we don't show it by giving them grief.

Alas we are all human and that means that sometimes we say things to our loved ones on the spur of the moment. Things we immediately regret.

On such an occasion has anyone ever said to you:-

"You wouldn't have said that if you didn't mean it!"

That hurts!

But maybe it's not true.

Perhaps on those occasions the words don't come from the heart they come from the anger.

And a question to think on could well be:-
Who is in control of that??

I came across this poem by Ogden Nash that gives advice for husbands. (But it could also be for wives):-

*"To keep your marriage brimming,
With love in the loving cup,
Whenever you're wrong, admit it;
Whenever you're right, shut up!"*

Of course, it's a different matter if the words are deliberate. If we mean to be inconsiderate or unkind towards someone then we show that we don't truly love them.

It's the same way if we use someone for our own ends that isn't love either.

We know that we should never take our loved ones for granted. Love needs a sensitivity - a willingness to give - and even a willingness to serve.

This service or obedience is what Jesus describes as the "perfect freedom."

That's because it is what we do out of love.

It's what loving parents do for their children and it's what we Christians do for each other.

If you like - Love is God's gift of himself to us, and our response is to love him in return.

Remember the song:- *A new Commandment I give unto you: That you love one another as I have loved you,*

And:-

"By this shall all men know that you are my disciples -

If you have love one for another."

This is the way Christian love grows!

That is by sharing God's love with each other.

Jesus says:-

V 21

"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."

With love!

Revd. Stephen