

Homily for May 14th 2002

Feast of St Matthias

An Apostle to Love

Today we celebrate the Feast Day of the last Apostle to be chosen. Matthias took the place of Judas, after the latter Apostle committed suicide. Judas was not able to accept that the way of Jesus was the way of Love and so he tragically ended his life despairing that he could be forgiven – his life was consumed by his betrayal of the One who is Love and so Matthias was chosen to become an overseer – that is a bishop and a witness to the Kingdom of Love. He became an Apostle to Love.

When we think of God's love for Israel, it is compared to a father's love for his son. His love for his people is stronger than a mother's for her children. God loves his people more than a bridegroom his beloved; his love will be victorious over even the worst infidelities and will extend to his most precious gift: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son." God's love is "everlasting": "For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you. Through Jeremiah, God declares to his people, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you." But St. John goes even further when he affirms that "God is love": God's very being is love. By sending his only Son and the Spirit of Love in the fullness of time, God has revealed his innermost secret: God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and he has destined us to share in that exchange. Out of this love Jesus calls us to remain in his love, because we are not slaves but true friends who in turn are to love one another.

Remain in My Love: We can never know everything about God the Father or any Person of the Trinity for that matter, but we do know that God is pure, unadulterated love. And his love for his Son is so powerful that it is manifest in the Spirit. Jesus tells us in these lines of Scripture that "as the Father loves me, so I also love you." No human being loves us as perfectly, wholly, and completely as Jesus does. And the love God the Father, Son, and Spirit have for us is unchanging and unconditional. We can't do anything about it. Whether we're naughty or nice, God loves us. We could spend hours and hours contemplating this truth and not scratch the surface of the depth of love God has for us. We will, by the grace of God and our living in His grace contemplate this awesome reality for all eternity. May we remain in this love as much as is humanly possible, starting afresh today.

We Are Not Slaves: Jesus tells us we are friends if we do what he commands of us. At times, however, we can feel like slaves. With a sense of duty, we abide by rules, conform to truths, offer penances, sacrifice for others, etc. We are never slaves, however, because God is not a slave master. Sin enslaves us. God is love. When we feel anything less than beloved, our perception of God has become warped. We have listened too closely, perhaps, to the great liar, Satan. In that case, we can return to the first verse in this passage and remind ourselves that we are eternally loved by the Lover of all lovers:

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you, abide in my love”

Love One Another: We just explored the infinite depth of Jesus' love for us, and now we are commanded by Jesus to love others as he loves us. It would be impossible, of course, were it not

for the fact that God has loved us first. When our hearts are full of the experiential knowledge and love of Jesus, love for others overflows. We love not with our own limited resources, but by the grace of Jesus. In his strength, it is possible to love even those who have hurt us.

“...Love, and do what you will. If you hold your peace, hold your peace out of love. If you cry out, cry out in love. If you correct someone, correct them out of love. If you spare them, spare them out of love. Let the root of love be in you: nothing can spring from it but good...” (St. Augustine).

Resolution: Lord, today by your grace I will look for a silent, hidden way to show my love for someone you have placed in my life.

Let us pray: Lord, increase my faith so that I may know something of your love for me. I want to believe in the depths of my heart that you love me infinitely and permanently. And help me also, Lord, to love others more perfectly. Only by your grace can I show your love to others.