

Homily For the Feast of St. Matthias, Apostle - Year I

St Peter's 8:30am Mass- Tuesday, May 14, 2019

Acts 1: 15-17,20-26 "Peter stood: Let another take his position ... they prayed, Lord show us which one."

Psalm 113: 1-8 "Who is like the Lord our God."

John 15: 9-17 "This is my commandment: Love one another as I have loved you."

Love is Everything

Introduction

What's the one thing that you would want to tell your family and those closest to you about the meaning of your life? What urgent message do you want to pass along as the essence of everything you've learned and that you've been about? For Jesus, there is no question that the message is love. How is it, then, that we can get so messed up about this central concept, this key and defining characteristic of Jesus, who is the ultimate creative and life sustaining power of the universe? HE gives us the answers to all the important questions: What should we do? Why should we do it? How should we do it? And, what will be the evidence if we do it?

What should we do?

Love one another as I have loved you. That's pretty clear and we could leave it there, but it is informative about Jesus' teaching method to see how his message of love grows during his ministry. He takes people where they are like he takes us where we are. At first, his message is: Love one another as you love yourself. You take care of your body. Think of love like that. Love others like you already love yourself. You can do that, can't you? Sure, you can.

Later on, especially with those closest to him, as they have become really close to him, the ones he is mentoring into a way of life, he says to them: Now, I want you to love one another the way you have come to love me. Don't keep it to yourself?

The final stage of learning to love, though, requires you to give of yourself. For God to be truly and fully present in the world, YOU must love the way I love you.

Why should we do it?

Essentially, you must love one another because it is my command to you. You must love, not because you feel like it or because you get something from it, but out of obedience to me. That's what I do. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Now I command you to do the same. But obedience is not like a soldier to his commander, or like a slave to his master. It is like a friend from whom you hold nothing back. I am in the Father and the Father, who IS love, is in me. That's what 'abide' means. It is to be attached to the tree which sustains our lives. So, to be obedient to me is to be obedient to love itself.

How should we do it?

Well, this is where the rubber meets the road, as it were. You see, no one has greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. That doesn't mean you have to earn my love by giving up your body. It means that this is what love looks like. And, of course, the exclamation point Jesus puts on this lesson is to show them by his Passion, by the cross, where he holds nothing back.

What will the result be if you do it?

Now we see that there is a reward - not like a lollipop for a child helping with the housework, but that obedience to love has its own reward built in. He will hold nothing back from us. Jesus explains: So that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. All of the anxiety and stress we experience will be transformed into the joy of knowing that we have abided in love and love abides in us. It takes us over. This is what the saints all know, despite whatever terrible circumstances they find themselves in.

Finally, Jesus promises: The Father will give you whatever you ask for in my name. That's what the Apostles found as they were deciding to replace Judas, who couldn't bring himself to trust in Jesus, who is love. And, what did they do in obedience to Jesus, who is love? Well, Peter exercised the authority Jesus placed

in him. He stood up among the believers. He interpreted the Scriptures through the lense of Jesus, who is love.

They asked the Lord to show the hearts of the two men. They prayed: Lord you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen. They didn't vote based on human decisions. They didn't give speeches and go with the best orators, like the Greeks. They cast lots for the two candidates. This was not a game of chance but a traditional way of discerning God's will once they had prayed.

Call To Action

What should we do? Love, of course. Why should we do it? Out of obedience to the Lord of love, who has commanded us. How should we do it? Enter onto that path, little by little, where we ask for help every day to hold nothing back. Make Jesus our 'all in all'. What will be the result if we do it? Jesus says: You did not choose me but I chose you. I think of Mary Magdalene at the tomb. She recognized Jesus because he called her name. That's what it means to be chosen. Here the Lord calling us by name and saying: I appointed you to go and bear fruit, the fruit of love. It's not an easy path, but can we trust that the Lord of all, who held nothing back from us, wants to give us everything, so that his joy may be in us, and so that our joy might be complete?