

“I give you a new commandment: love one another.” It is love that leads to glorification.

In our English language the word, love, tends to mean a profoundly tender, passionate affection. This meaning varies depending upon how it is presented in songs, movies, in the news media, among friends or in families. To better understand the new commandment we need to briefly look at the Greek language. The Greeks had several words representing different aspects of love. Eros generally had to do with sexual love. We derive the English term, “erotic.” Then there was the noun *storge*. This term was primarily related to family affection, a natural affection. A very common word for love during the time of Jesus was *philia*. It is the word of genuine affection, heartfelt love. It is seen in the name, Philadelphia (brotherly love). The noblest form of love, however, was *agape*. In today’s gospel Jesus speaks of *agápe*, a love that requires total commitment and trust. It is the kind of love with which God loves us, a love that should be the model of the love we have for others. It is the love of God and the love of others that is glorification.

In the book, *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, there's a story about a man who came out of his office one Christmas morning and found a little boy from a nearby project looking with great admiration at the man’s new vehicle. The little boy asked, "Does this car belong to you?" And the man said, "Yes. In fact my brother gave it to me for Christmas. I've just gotten it." With that, the little boy's eyes widened. He said, "You mean to say that somebody gave it to you? And you didn't have to pay anything for it?" And the man said, "That's right. My brother gave it to me as a gift." With that the little boy let out a long sigh and said, "Boy, I would really like..." The man fully expected the boy to say, "I would like to have a brother like that, who would give me such a beautiful car," but instead the man was amazed when the little boy said, "Wow! I would like to be that kind of brother. I wish I could give that kind of car to my little brother." Somehow that child understood the secret of love, the love Jesus speaks to us today. True love consists, not in "getting" something from the lover, but in "giving" something to the loved one.

Love should be more than just a warm feeling toward others; it should be a compassionate gift of ourselves to meet the spiritual and bodily needs of our brothers and sisters. *Agápe* implies a reaching out to others in a caring attitude, for their wellbeing, without expecting any favor in return. It is strong, positive, difficult, determined action. Jesus’ love was a love that healed and built up, that challenged and inspired people. It was a deeply forgiving and sacrificial love. *Agape*, the love of Jesus, takes time and a continuing effort on our part. Our society and our daily lives too often suggest self satisfaction and self love. *Agape*, the love Jesus shares with the Father and shares with us, does not come easily. It takes time and perseverance.

Once upon a time there was an island where all the feelings lived: Happiness, Sadness, and all of the others, including Love. One day it was announced to the feelings that the island would sink, so all repaired their boats to leave. Love was the only one who wanted to stay. Love wanted to persevere until the last possible moment when the island was almost sinking. Finally Love decided to ask for help.

Richness was passing by Love in a grand boat. Love said, "Richness, can you take me with you?" Richness answered, "No I can't. There is a lot of gold and silver in my boat. There is no place for you here." Love decided to ask Vanity who was also passing by in a beautiful vessel, "Vanity, please help me!" "I can't help you Love. You are all wet and might damage my boat," Vanity answered. Sadness was close by so Love asked for help, "Sadness let me go with you." "Oh...Love, I am so sad that I need to be by myself!" Happiness passed by Love too, but she was so happy that she did not even hear when Love called her!

Suddenly, there was a voice, "Come Love, I will take you." It was an elder. Love felt so blessed and overjoyed that he even forgot to ask the elder her name. When they arrived at dry land, the elder went her own way. Love realizing how much he owed the elder, asked Knowledge, another elder, "Who helped me?" "It was Time", Knowledge answered. "Time?" asked Love. "But why did Time help me?" Knowledge smiled with deep wisdom and answered, "Because with Time we are capable of understanding how real Love is."

May we grow in love glorify Jesus and the Father and may our love lead to our glorification. *Agape*, love, is glorification of God.