

Closing Prayer

God of all nations,
in the gift of your Son
you have embraced the world
with a love that takes away our sin
and bestows perfect joy.

Grant to all who have been reborn in baptism
fidelity in serving you
and generosity in loving one another.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, the first-born from the dead,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Opening prayers · Easter 6, Year B³

CPL • LBC Year B Easter 6.odt • 2021-04-13

³ *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary* / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999.

The Sixth Sunday of Easter

Principal Service readings

Acts 10.44-48

Baptism of the first gentiles

Psalm 98

Praise the God of saving justice

1 John 5.1-6

Love of God is keeping his commandments

John 15.9-17

The new commandment to love one another

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

The new commandment to love one another

Jesus said to his disciples: ⁹As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

¹²This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.'

John 15.9-17 NRSV¹

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Comments and Questions

Jesus says that in all he does he looks to the Father (15.9), and that this impels his own actions. A unity of love bonds the sender and the sent one (cf. 3.35; 5.20; 10.17; 14.31). Jesus commands his disciples to be part of that oneness by abiding in his love (15.9b). However, to be a disciple abiding in the love of Jesus means to 'do' something, and that 'doing' is determined by the commandments of Jesus (15.10a). Jesus is not the source of this abiding love, for it comes from the relationship of love that exists between the Father and the Son, the result of Jesus having kept the commandments of the Father and abiding in his love (15.10b).

The reason for Jesus' words on abiding, loving, and keeping the commandments in that the joy that Jesus has from his relationship of unity and obedience with the Father might also be with his disciples. Then the joy of the disciples will be complete (15.11). There has been a gradual progression from the metaphor of the vine, which introduced the theme of abiding, into an insistence that to abide in Jesus means to abide in his love (15.9-11). The disciples' abiding in the love of Jesus and in the keeping of his commandments unites them with Jesus himself, and with his response to the Father, and so inserts the disciples into 'the chain of love'.²

Jesus tells the disciples of the new situation that flows from their having been loved and chosen (15.15-16). They are to love one another because of this initiative of Jesus (15.12-14, 17). The command to love one another is not actually new, for Jesus has already given it in 13.34 – the 'new commandment' – after the treachery of Judas has been foretold. Jesus' love has established a new relationship, a relationship in which he will love them to death, so they are to do the same (15.12,14). Jesus concludes by saying that in their new situation they are friends not servants (15.14-15). Some scholars read 'but I chose you' (15.16) as John's version of the appointment of the foundational disciples. However, it applies to all disciples of Jesus; all are to 'bear fruit' by continuing in the same quality of love that marks them out as disciples of Jesus (13.35; cf. 15.8).

² *The Farewell of the word: the Johannine call to abide* / Fernando F. Segovia. – Minneapolis : Fortress Press, 1991. – p.148–163.

Quotations

1

Our maturity will be judged by how well we are able to agree to disagree and yet continue to love one another, to care for one another, and cherish one another and seek the greater good of the other.

Desmond Tutu, 1931–

2

We have enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another.

Jonathan Swift, 1667–1745

3

The art of love is God at work through you.

The art of living treasure chest / Wilferd Arlan Peterson. 1977

4

Those in the circle of Christ had no doubt of his love; those in our circles should have no doubt about ours.

Just like Jesus: a heart like his / Max Lucado. 1998

Related topics

For further study:

Love of God; faith, hope, and love; evangelisation; ecumenism; paschal mystery; mystery of suffering; moral living; the great commandments; justice; baptism; sacraments