

5th Sunday of Easter

John 13:31-33a, 34-35

To put today's passage in perspective, it is taken from John's Gospel, chapter 13, at the beginning of the section called The Book of Glory, which begins with the foot-washing and the announcement of Judas's betrayal. Note that that Judas' feet were also washed. He was not left out. Then Peter nodded to the Beloved Disciple to find out from Jesus who is the person who is to betray him. And Jesus answered him, "It is the one to whom I hand the morsel after I have dipped it." In other words, it is the one to whom I also give communion. So, it is interesting that communion was given to even Judas, and *he wasn't even Catholic*, and it was by *intinction!*

"After Judas took the morsel, Satan entered him...and left at once." (Maybe that is why the church doesn't like intinction.) This sets the stage for today's gospel passage, "When Judas had left them..."

And then Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him." Then Jesus gives a new commandment: love one another, agape love, a love where one is willing to die for the other. This is the same verb that Jesus will use with Peter after the resurrection. "Do you love me, Peter?" agape love, with a love that you are willing to die for me. In the verse that follows, Peter, with great braggadocio, claims he will lay down his life for Jesus. Of course, Jesus simply responds, "Today, you will deny me three times."

The commandment of love is directed to us. "This is how all will know that you are my disciples." But let us face it, most of us are philanthropists. We love one another with a love that is willing to help our neighbor, especially in times of trouble, like flooding, tornadoes, hurricanes, and other natural disasters. But to lay down our lives, that is the million dollar question.

Unfortunately, Judas gave up his life not out of agape love, but with a rope.

Ronald Rolheiser poses several questions in his article, "What is love asking of us now?" from his syndicated column, *In Exile*.

"What does it mean to love in a time like this? What does it mean to love in a time when people can no longer agree on what is true? How

do we remain civil and respectful when it feels impossible to respect those who disagree with us?"

It isn't easy. As Diana Hayes writes in her Saturday's Reflection, "How do I love others who are so different from me: I cannot even love all the members of my family. I cannot love my cousins, aunts, those with whom I come into contact every single day. They don't think like me; they don't act like me they don't look like me. How am I supposed to love them?"

Interestingly, Fr. Rolheiser offers the *Via Negativa*, an ancient way of doing theology, by stating what God is not, in other words, what we should not do to others.

"We should not legitimize *disrespect and demonization*; but we should also not be unhealthily passive, fearful that speaking our truth will upset others. We may not disregard truth and let lies and injustices lie comfortable and unexposed. We must resist the subtle temptation to allow our righteousness to morph into self-righteousness."

What is love asking of us now? While we cannot always be nice, at least be civil and respectful. And that is what Jesus did with Judas, knowing he would betray him. And that is what Jesus did with Peter, knowing quite well he would deny him three times. Through love, Peter at least picked up the pieces and repented unto God and eventually become our first pope! He knew his limits when after the Resurrection of Christ, he responds to Jesus' questions, "Yes Lord, you know that I love you," with a love that is willing to help my brothers, but not yet ready to die for them...or you.

Diana Hayes writes at the end of her reflection, "Jesus loves us all, including the man who betrayed him, Judas." Jesus was civil to the point that the other disciples never knew that Judas was about to arrange their masters' arrest. Diana suggests by imitating Jesus, "...by trying our best to overcome our human foibles, like Peter, and reaching out with hands and hearts, hopeful that our love will be returned as Jesus returned our love for him."

And they will know we are followers of Christ by our love for one another.