

6th Sunday of Easter – John 15:9-17

"No one has greater love than this.

to lay down one's life for one's friend."

Sometimes in John's gospel Discourse, a key word is repeated again and again. Such a word in today's passage is **Love**. During his ministry, Jesus taught mostly about Life, but once the (Last) Supper began, it was **love** that Jesus emphasized. We learn how this love is shown by the Father to the Son, how the disciple must not only abide in Jesus, as a branch in the vine, but must also abide in the love of Jesus. Surprisingly, the disciples are not told to love Jesus but to keep his commandments. The only commandment found in John is that of mutual love to be limited only by death. Hence, the disciples of Jesus become no longer servants but friends, as Moses had been a friend of God. This is what Jesus meant when at the beginning of the Supper, he had washed the feet of the disciples and told them to wash one another's feet; they were to love each other as he had loved them.

I was the middle child in our family. So, I craved attention, and when others got what I felt more, I would get jealous. One time I threw a fit for I don't know what reason and told my mother that she loved my older brother, Greg, more than me. And I was adamant about it. Wham! She gave me a good slap across my face. I was stunned. She had my attention. "I love you all, one no more than the others. Get that into your head and don't ever say that again!" I never did, and eventually, at one point in my life, I actually did believe my Mom that she loved each one of us, ***one no more than the other.***

At one point in my life, I also realized that God loves me no more than all the others on this planet...not because I'm good, not because I am a Catholic, nor a Christian, nor an American, a religious, or priest, etc. God loves me no more than the others on this planet. How do I love this supreme being in return, that is not only mind boggling and I have no way I can truly grasp with my mind, let alone with my arms for a real good hug, or my heart?

But, thanks be to God for his Son, Jesus Christ, a God who I cannot quite grasp with my mind, but I can imagine a real good hug.

Once there was a monastery, long ago, that had fallen on hard times. At one time it was a large, beautiful monastery that used to have over a hundred

monks living within its walls. Now, less than a dozen survived, and all growing old.

The Abbat would often go out and visit an old Rabbi in the woods on their property who lived as a hermit. He had gotten permission years ago and was a constant comfort for the monks that remained, especially the abbot. This time when he visited the Rabbi, the abbot could visibly tell his days were almost coming to an end, also. After their initial greetings always with respect and tenderness, the abbot talked again about the deteriorating condition of the monastery and how hope for the future seemed very dim.

The Rabbi also sensed that his days were few on this earth, but also felt that his reason for living here next to the monastery was now coming to an end, and all he could offer the abbot was the dream he had only a few months before. He now felt compelled to share his dream with the wonderful man standing before him. "Rabbi," he began. "I had a dream several months before. And like several other times when I shared my dreams with you, I always waited for confirmation to make sure the dream was true."

The abbot looked up with great interest. As the rabbi said, this wasn't the first time he had shared his dreams. He had always respected the holy rabbi and even felt a deep presence of God when in his presence. "Please share with me, my brother, your dream from God," the abbot requested, now almost beside himself.

"It is simply this," the rabbi said. "The Lord has made known to me that one of you are the Messiah!" And he added, "Don't tell anyone!" Well, the abbot was so taken aback that he left without saying farewell. "Don't tell anyone," the abbot thought. "But surely my best friend!" he thought. And he did. And his best friend also told his best friend. Naturally, after a short while all the monks knew, but no one said anything to anyone. However, they all started treating each one as though they were the Messiah, just in case. After a while, they forgot why, but still the effect was visible. Even those who would come for a visit or a stay or for the liturgy noticed how they loved one another!

The monks would bow ever so reverently to one another. Several monks, at the Kiss of Peace, would give hugs that one would think they were long lost brothers now united. Then the young men started to come...and stay.