



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER, CYCLE A

Fr. David Rosenberg

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"If you love me you will keep my commandments." John 14:15

In this week's Gospel we continue in the fourteenth chapter of John. As with last week, Jesus prepares His disciples (us included) to move away from the resurrected Jesus toward His glorified presence in the world, as the *Spirit of Truth*. We are inspired and illuminated to consider life through spiritual eyes, rather than just purely with our physical and mental eyes. The charm and attraction we have for the image of the resurrected Jesus walking the earth is replaced by the wisdom and insight that enable us to see, in the coming of the Spirit, an even more intimate union with God, through the Eucharist and His Church.

Jesus begins his lesson with the words, *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."* Jesus, raised in the orthodox Jewish tradition, would have prayed this prayer, called the *Shema*, several times a day. The *Shema* is one of the Old Testament verses quoted in the New Testament. The Gospel of Mark 12:29–31 mentions that Jesus of Nazareth considered the opening exhortation of the *Shema* to be the first of the two greatest commandments and linked with a second based on Leviticus 19:18b: *"The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."* In Luke 10:25–27

The concept of love has many meanings in the English language. C.S. Lewis wrote of what he called the *"Four Loves," Affection, Friendship, Romance, and Charity*, each scripturally based. He likens *Affection* to animals and the care of mother to babe. In scripture, Jesus speaks of the affection between a hen and her chicks. *"How often I've longed to gather your children like a hen, her brood safe under her wings."* Luke 13:34 *"Friendship,"* wrote Lewis, *"seems the happiest ... of all loves."* *"Sweet friendships refresh the soul and awaken our hearts with joy, for good friends are like the anointing oil that yields the fragrant incense of God's presence."* Proverbs 27:9 Lewis wrote that *Romantic love* *"overleaps the massive wall of our selfhood..."* where two are joined in the bonds of matrimony. *"He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the Church..."* Ephesians 5:33

Charity is the fourth and greatest love. In the First Letter of St John chapter four we are told, *"God IS Love."* Love in this context is charity and mercy, timeless as it transcends the bonds of mortality. This depth of illuminated spirituality makes possible for mere sinful humans to be fulfilled as Jesus states, *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."* As you empty your senses in *kenosis*, the emptying of one's self, as Jesus did to take on flesh: *"...though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, so he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness..."* see *Philippians 2:6-7*

The outward sacramental sign of this ultimate love is our holy obedience freely given, as we take on the incarnate flesh of Jesus Christ and his Sacred Heart through the Eucharist. Holy Obedience is a term to consider in your reflection this week. What does it take to empty ourselves and take on Christ, who was obedient even to his death, death on the cross. Once we ascend to this height, *Holy Obedience* is freely offered as we completely love and trust God in the Trinity.

Of course, the world cannot accept this, because it neither sees nor accepts that which is only grasped through illuminated senses. Ponder this week this total *"kenosis"* and the pure joy that suffuses us in this *Eucharistic* transformation. *"I am the way, the Truth and the Life."*

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John

Jesus said to his disciples:

*"If you love me, you will keep my commandments.
And I will ask the Father,
and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always,
the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept,
because it neither sees nor knows him.
But you know him, because he remains with you,
and will be in you.
I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.
In a little while the world will no longer see me,
but you will see me, because I live and you will live.
On that day you will realize that I am in my Father
and you are in me and I in you.
Whoever has my commandments and observes them
is the one who loves me.
And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father,
and I will love him and reveal myself to him."*

The Gospel of the Lord

