

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit Amen

Jesus said: I have called you friends...abide in my love" (John 15:1-17)

Today's reading forms a part of Jesus' parting sayings to his disciples, as He prepares them for the time of His Ascension when He would physically leave them.

This section of teachings is also known as Jesus' farewell discourse and priestly prayers.

In them Jesus discloses to us that God is calling his own and chooses those who are to live as his true friends, regardless of our status.

And so these are instructions on how we are to: abide in His love, and love others with God's love. And so Jesus said:

'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.'

Remember that God does not choose us to isolate us from the difficulties of this life. But rather, to live our lives with the assurance that God has chosen us, loves us, and has a purpose for each of us

Knowing this we give us the courage to face the challenges and renew our strength to overcome these challenges.

Remember that, Jesus knew that there were challenges ahead of his disciples. And we know that they had isolated themselves in the Upper Room after Christ's ascension, awaiting the promised Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

And so here Jesus assures them afore hand that they are loved and encourages them to abide in his Love.

“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.” He told them.

The word translated as ‘abide’ can also be translated as, remain, or “stay, and after a year of lockdown, quarantine, and social distancing, I am sure that we have all become very familiar with those words, and we all most certainly know what it means to remain, shelter in a safe place and to stay at home.

I am sure that we have also become intimately familiar with the inside of our own homes and maybe even with the interior of our own minds in ways we likely haven’t done before.

The time spent on our own might have even opened our eyes to areas in our lives that might need some pruning in order to become more functional and to be more fruitful.

The scriptures affirm that God is Love and that Jesus' death and resurrection has healed our brokenness so that we can participate in that love.

Today we hear Jesus telling us that divine love comes to us as a gift, but also it comes with a command and a duty...

‘As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.’

Chapter 15:1-8 of John’s Gospel, connects nicely with our text for today from Chapter 15:9-17. Since it is clear that loving each other cannot be separated from the idea of the fruit connected to the vine. Neither can the relationship between Jesus and God the father be disconnected from the

relationship between Jesus and His disciples; which also correlates with that intimate relationship, Jesus wants the disciples to maintain as they serve in His name.

This is the same loving relationship Jesus wants us to carry in our hearts as we live out our own faith stories.

This is why Jesus exhorts us to abide in my love. And said “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments”

echoing the vine and branches analogy showing that when we are connected to the Creator, we can bear much fruit since by doing so we are abiding in God’s love. Therefore love is the “glue” that holds these relationships together.

As revealed by God’s love for Jesus and Jesus’ love for us, when we abide in His love, we also abide in God’s love.

It is this integrated love of Jesus that we are to hold in our hearts and share with those with whom we have contact.

I believe ‘The Message’ translation of this text really draws out that really wonderful image of Jesus’ dialogue with his disciples.

And it reads:

“I’ve loved you the way my Father has loved me.

If you keep my commands, you’ll remain intimately at home in my love.

That’s what I’ve done -- kept my Father’s commands and made myself at home in his love.

Make yourselves at home in my love.” To be at home with God’s love - we must keep his commandments.”

It is said the home is where our heart is!
Home is that familiar, secure, and comfortable place that we share with family and friends.

Today Jesus calls you and I friends. And asks us to...abide in His love. According to Jesus the definition of a friend is one who is fully informed.

Today Jesus wants us to know that it is He who has: chosen us, and: asked us to be on his side, and become a member of his team.

We didn't pick Christ. It was He who has sought us out, recruited us as it were, not by coercion, nor by conscription.

But out of loving care, out of belief in us, out of concern that we get to know him, to enjoy fellowship together with Him, and become everything we are capable of. And so all we are and do as Easter people is in response to the gospel message that tells us we are called, chosen, and cherished by the One who created us.

What an honor and privilege!

It is a result of this privilege that we find pleasure in doing God's will as we enjoy fellowship with Jesus Christ in doing His will.

Can you imagine any greater fulfillment than the satisfaction of doing God’s will?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the revered German martyr who was killed resisting Hitler's Third Reich in 1945, described the church as:

"Christ taking form in a body of believers."

Did you get that?

Each one of us here today, at St Peters De Beauvoir are Christ's representative in this gathered, body of believers.

Therefore we are to understand that church is not so much an institution with rules, Regulations, and rituals, but an intricate body of relationships.

And more than an organization, the Church is an organism of people who love God, who seek to do God's will, who love and cherish each other, treat each other with dignity and honesty, gladly caring for each other's needs, and building bridges of understanding and peace.

The words of our text from Jesus' farewell discourse and prayers is said to be Jesus last will and testament between Him and his disciples. In it the Lord bares his soul in his last hours on earth.

In it Jesus makes it clear to his followers that they are not servants...but friends.

'A servant does not know what his master is doing,' as Jesus pointed out.

Friends, on the other hand, are absolutely open and honest with each other.

We count on friends to speak the truth in love.

And encourage us to think again when we are missing the mark.

Being a friend can move us into unknown territories. And when we are a friend in Christ we can dream dreams of love that can change the contours of our world.

Because Jesus said to his disciples, "I have made known to you everything I have heard from my Father. We have shared fully and freely."

And most important of all, friends value each other's lives as much as they value their own.

They are willing to lay their lives down for each other.

Dr. Peter Storey, a great spiritual leader in South Africa who worked along with Archbishop Tutu and President Nelson Mandela in dismantling apartheid, said that: "when we invite Christ into our lives, he insists that we let him bring his friends with him."

At church today we may see people that we know and like, know and don't like, or don't know at all.

However today Jesus is commanding us to regard each other as a friend, so that we might: bear fruit, fruit that endures.

Jesus makes it unmistakable clear that we cannot truly love him and not also love those he loves and those for whom he died.

We must love even those we do not or cannot like, for Christ's sake.

Because Jesus main message to us is that we love one another as He Loves. **Amen**