



Family Connections

6th Sunday of Easter (Year B)



John 15: 9 – 17

Jesus said to his disciples: “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.

“I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.

“You are my friends if you do what I command you. I 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.

“You 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. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”



Reflection:

Do I love you enough to play with you? Do I love you enough to share my secrets with you? Do I love you enough to take care of you? Do I love you enough to die for you? To some of these questions you may have said “Yes”, to others you may not be so sure. Not all love is the same. Our love for our parents is very different from the love of a classmate or friend; our love for our spouse is very different than the love we have for our children. Jesus loves us so much that he is willing to die for each one of us, not because of anything we have done, but because we belong to him.



Table Discussion (at mealtime):

What do you think Jesus means, when he says: “Love one another as I have loved you”? What would that look like in your own life?



God Chooses me (a reflection):

A young girl was once bullied on the playground. Her classmates were making fun of the fact that she had been adopted. The young girl stood her ground and said: "My parents chose me; your parents got stuck with you."

Although the young girl's words may seem harsh at first, there is something beautiful in how she sees herself. She has been chosen, chosen from among others, to be a daughter to her parents in every sense of the word.

And that is what we are to God, daughters and sons, adopted by Him to be His children. Sometimes we focus so much in the choice that we make, in order to follow Him, that we forget that He chooses us first. Regardless of how we feel towards Him, in any particular moment, or how far we have removed ourselves from Him, there is one thing we cannot change: God has chosen us, and continues to choose us every moment of the day. There is something very beautiful in that.

Reflection exercise: Take a moment to reflect on God's choice, that He has chosen you, and write a short response in your prayer journal or make a picture of how that makes you feel.

Picking Teams (a reflection):

Most of us have had the experience of picking teams, where two team leaders are chosen and take turns picking from among a group of classmates. Most of us have also had the experience of having been passed over once or more for a better player or a closer friend. At times, it is hard to be picked towards the end, especially when one of the team leaders is a friend.

Sometimes this experience repeats itself when it comes time to go to university or when you look for work. We all have good experiences of being chosen, but all of us can remember the bad experiences as well. "Pick me," I used to whisper in my heart, as I waited for the selection to be made. "I'll make sure you don't regret it. I'll do my best, don't you see." Not to be given a chance, that's the hardest thing of all.

« You did not choose me but I chose you.» We sometimes think it is up to us. But long before we choose to follow God, and the beautiful way he lays out for us, he loves us, takes care of us and gives us all we need. Choosing to follow Him may not always make a big difference to others, except ourselves. It fills us with joy.

Reflection exercise: Take a moment to reflect on how great a friend you have in Jesus, who has chosen you from the beginning, and shown you His love on the cross. How has the choice been His from the beginning, and how will your choice add to your joy?



Meditation on the Cross:

There are many examples of love in the world. Many people have tried to express what love is through song, poems, stories and actions. On the night before He died, Jesus told His friends: "Love one another as I have loved."

Many people have lived their lives since He told us to do so. Many are the Saints whose lives are remembered for extraordinary signs of service, forgiveness, generosity and self-sacrifice. As many of them have told us, "It begins with the little things; try to do even the smallest and ordinary thing with love."

That's not always easy, I can assure you of that. That's why we turn to Jesus and the strength of His cross. Are you having trouble with forgiveness, or struggling with a particular person or task? Do you find it hard to be generous, to serve others or to give of yourself? Don't grow discouraged and do not give up. Take the cross off your wall and hold it in your hands. Then ask Jesus: "Teach me how to love."

Repeat the prayer from time to time, while focusing on Jesus gift of Himself on the cross in silence.

The Fruits that come from love / the Cross:

The Bible tells us of the many fruits that come from love. Here are some of them:

- Patience
- Generosity
- Endurance/Perseverance
- Joy
- Chastity
- Compassion/Care/Concern
- Gentleness/Kindness
- Service
- Forgiveness
- Self-sacrifice
- Charity
- Self-discipline
- Hope
- Wisdom
- Courage
- Reverence
- Right Judgment
- And many more...

Take a moment to make your own family list of favourites. Then make a family collage of the cross as a tree of love, incorporating the many fruits that come from it. Let this serve as a reflection piece for your family. **(It could be the centrepiece of the following Family Meditation Service).**



Family Meditation Service:

Gather around the family cross you have made.

Start by making the sign of the cross.

Opening Instruction: Take a moment to pick one of the fruits that come from the cross and ask God to help you use that fruit in your family interactions. (You may even have them write it down on a piece of hard stock paper in the shape of a fruit.)

(Give them time to do so)

Opening Prayer:

Lord God, it is hard for us to even imagine how much it must have hurt to see your Son die on the cross. And yet, you suffered that pain for us, so that we can know how much you love us. As we gather today around your cross, help us to love one another as you have loved us and use the fruits that each one of us has chosen, in our daily family tasks. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John:

Jesus said: "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you, abide in my love."

Jesus also said: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."

Jesus finished by saying: "You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last... I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another."

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Instruction: God is asking us to grow in our love for him and for others. Take a moment to look at the fruit of love that you have chosen and ask God to help you to use it in the coming days. You may also want to think of one or two ways that you can use this gift in your interactions with other family members.

Recite together:

Lord, make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.