

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

5th Sunday of Easter | For Sunday, May 15, 2022

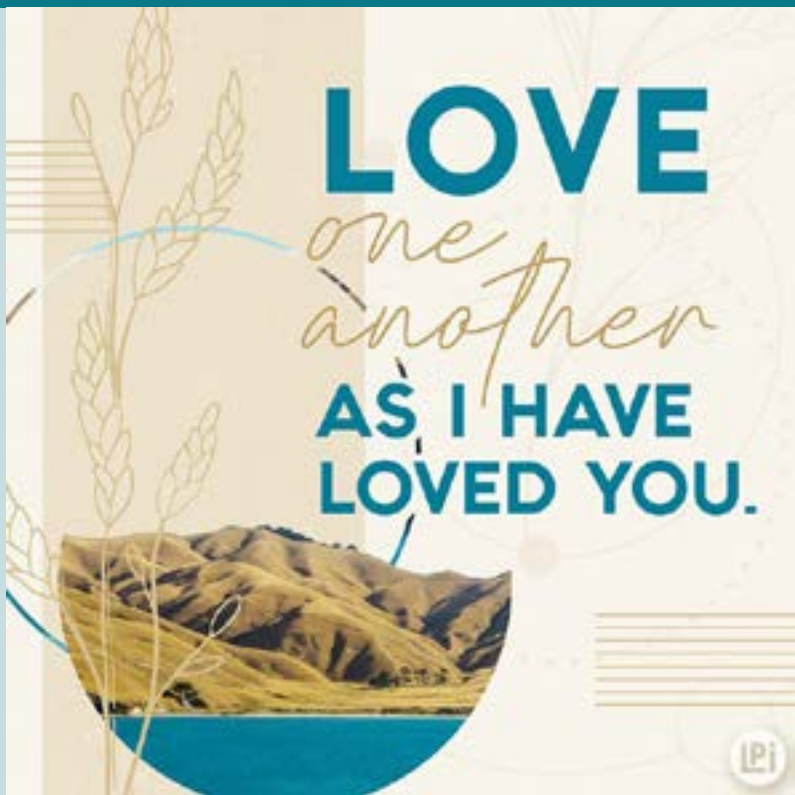
A Love That Is Unconditional, Sacrificial, and Permanent

Written by Douglas Sousa

Acts 14:21-27

Revelations 21:1-5a

John 13:31-33a, 34-35



We are called to love as Jesus loved, even when it hurts.

One of the untold stories about our country's armed forces is of the priests who serve the spiritual needs of those who defend us. One priest who served bravely and faithfully was [Fr. Emil Joseph Kapaun](#).

A few years after he was ordained, he decided to serve as an army chaplain and was eventually sent to minister to the troops fighting in Korea in 1950. During one especially fierce battle, he was given the opportunity to fall back to a safer location in the field. However, he refused, preferring to stay by the side of the wounded and dying. He was finally captured by the Chinese forces and was marched 87 miles to a prisoner of war camp in North Korea.

During his stay at the camp, he regularly risked punishment to visit the other prisoners offering them comfort, hearing their confessions, and celebrating Mass. Often he would go without food to share it with the sick. He died in the prisoner of war camp of starvation and pneumonia on May 23, 1951.

Those soldiers who knew Fr. Kapaun called him their hero. His humility and love helped them endure imprisonment, torture, and hours of interrogation. He was also remembered for the holiness of his life which radiated through all he did.

[In today's gospel](#), Jesus encourages us to love one another as he has loved us. He tells us in another place in Saint John's gospel that there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for another. Jesus showed this love by his willingness to be humiliated, scourged, and crucified for our sins. Fr. Emil Kapaun also gives us an example of such love in everything he did, especially in his willingness to sacrifice his comfort, his health, and eventually his life for his brother soldiers.

It is precisely this type of love that Christ is calling us to express in our everyday lives. We often think of love merely as a feeling of affection between spouses, family members or friends. It is an emotion or an attachment that is shared and reciprocated. If I love you, I expect you to love me back. We also know that this type of love does not always last. We lose touch with friends, or we get into conflicts with them that cause resentment. The minute one person stops loving the other, the relationship comes to an end.

However, this is not the type of love which Jesus is calling us to have. This is not the type of love that sets his disciples apart. Rather, the love of Jesus is not based on feelings, on whether the other person loves us back or on how convenient the relationship is. Instead, Jesus' love is unconditional, sacrificial, and permanent.

The love of God is demanding. It requires much of us. The only way it is possible to live such a love is to realize that God has loved us first. When we experience the unconditional, sacrificial, and permanent love of our Heavenly Father, we will find the strength and inspiration to love in just the same way. It is the love that Jesus showed on the cross. It is the love that Fr. Emil Kapaun and countless other saints have shown in their ministries. And it is that love that we are called to show in everything we do.

Douglas Sousa

PRAYER

O God, Trinity of love,
From the profound communion of your divine life,
Pour out upon us a torrent of fraternal love.
Grant us the love reflected in the actions of Jesus,
In his family of Nazareth,
And in the early Christian community.
Grant that we Christians may live the Gospel,
Discovering Christ in each human being,
Recognizing him crucified
In the sufferings of the abandoned
And forgotten of our world,
And risen in each brother or sister
Who makes a new start.
Come Holy Spirit,
Show us your beauty in all the peoples of the earth,
So that we may discover anew
That all are important and all are necessary,
Different faces of the one humanity
That God so loves. Amen.

Fratelli Tutti, Pope Francis