

## “The Ways of the Spirit”

John 14:15-21

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<sup>15</sup>“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. <sup>16</sup>And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. <sup>17</sup>This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

<sup>18</sup>“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. <sup>19</sup>In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup>On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. <sup>21</sup>They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

Prayer.

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments,” Jesus teaches His disciples.

We all know what the Ten Commandments are, as found in Exodus and Deuteronomy. Some of us may even be able to recall learning them in Sunday school, and could recite them word for word, if called upon. They come from our common Jewish heritage, the same heritage we share with Jesus.

But today the emphasis is on *my*; “If you love me, you will keep *my* commandments.” “Jesus had commandments?” you ask. Or “Jesus added to the commandments that we already had?”

Yes, of course He did. Consider His two most important commandments: “Love the Lord you God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and love your neighbors as yourself.” (Matthew 22:37, Luke 10:27). In fact, Jesus' commandments appear to have love as a consistent theme. “Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.” (Matthew 5:44).

Love is indeed the motive for God's works through Jesus Christ. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16). Therefore, we can make the connection that all those commands of Jesus that don't specifically mention love- well, they are all about

love, anyways. They may not mention love, but it is assumed that love is their foundation in the first place.

Consider the Great Commission: “Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Mt. 28:18-20). Jesus wants His disciples to spread the Good News to all the world and to baptize exactly as He prescribes. It is God's will to save the world; therefore, commissioning His disciples to evangelize the world is God's gracious gift of love to the world. God loves us so much that He desires us to be baptized into Christianity, to be taught the ways of Jesus, and to be given everlasting life to all those who believe in Him.

Consider Jesus' commandment, the commandment He made for us at the Last Supper, as recorded in Paul's letter to the Church in Corinth: The Apostle writes "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'" (1 Corinthians 11:23-24). Paul continued, "In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.'" (1 Corinthians 11:25).

Jesus' commandment to eat and drink the bread and the cup in remembrance of Him is a command of love. His gift of love through the Holy Meal has been passed down to the Church for nearly 2,000 years. It remains His legacy of love.

Today, when we eat and taste it, we are filled with His love. At this table, the Spirit of Christ will work through the elements to claim us as one of God's own children, no longer an orphan to sin, but adopted into the loving household of God. The bread and wine will wash us clean when we are penitent. And the elements will draw us closer, *lure* us closer (some would say), to a closer walk with our Savior Himself, Jesus Christ.

God “will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever,” Jesus promises (John 14:16).

The ways of the Spirit is this: The Spirit is our Advocate; one who represents us, stands up for us, even cheers for us. Our Advocate works to build our self esteem and self confidence in all matters of life, especially in issues related to faith. Our Advocate intercedes on our behalf, even when we find it impossible to articulate our needs on our own. Our Advocate is our guide and guardian; the one who shows us the Way, the one who protects us on the Way, and is the only one who is our Way. Our Advocate, the Holy Spirit, is evidence of God's

continuing love for humankind; of God's love for you and for me.

The ways of the Spirit are grounded in love. Love, from the Father, through Jesus the Son. Love through the Spirit's advocacy on our behalf. Love through the Sacrament of Baptism, which sealed us as His disciples. Love through the Sacrament of the Holy Meal, the gifts of bread and wine.

Dearly beloved, let us approach this Table today, these gifts of love returned to us, as people transformed and empowered by God's love. As the Spirit is invoked, let us be reminded of the enormous capacity of God's love for all God's people, His Holy Church- Apostolic, Catholic, and Universal, of God's love for this faith community we know as Zion, and of God's love for each of us gathered here today.

God's love; that's God's Way. It is the Way of the Spirit. Amen.