

BRINGING HOME THE GOSPEL

May 15, 2022 • 5th Sunday of Easter • John 13:31-33, 34-35

Jesus Gives a New Commandment

Jesus tells his disciples that he will only be with them for a little while longer. He then gives them a new commandment: "...[L]ove one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (vv. 34-35).

Every time I read Paul's description of the love Jesus practiced and in turn expects his disciples to practice, I cringe. Paul writes, "Love is patient... it does not insist on its own way..." (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). Perhaps this is such a difficult notion to embrace because patience does not come easily to me. When I was raising my children, it seemed an impossible feat to maintain my patience.

I love my children, and I would give my life for them. But there were times when they were young that I was anything but patient and mild-tempered. At one point, I had a six-year-old, three little ones under the age of three and a husband who traveled.

There were days when the children teased each other, screamed and fought, and I joined right in, screaming even louder. I would go to bed hating myself, resolving to keep my cool the next day, but I'd get up in the morning and before noon I would lose my temper again. Finally, on a retreat, I learned that there were some things about ourselves that we just can't change through sheer willpower. No matter how much we want to, no matter how many times we try, we just can't do it.

So, as the retreat director had suggested, I turned it over to God. Every morning, I asked God for the patience I needed to get me to lunch. At lunch, I prayed to make it to dinner, at dinner, to bedtime. And it worked. After a few weeks I woke up to a different household. Because I was calmer, so were

the kids. God's patient love became mine. I'd like to say the change was permanent, but it wasn't. I'd break the cycle and have to start praying hourly all over again. But I learned something very important through it all. I learned that the love Paul was talking about in 1 Corinthians is God's love, which is even more powerful than a mother's love. The good news is that this love is mine for the asking, and once I receive it I am free to share it with my children.

FAMILY RESPONSE

Talk about how difficult it is to change old habits and how we sometimes need God's help. Suggest that each family member writes down one habit he or she would like help with. Say a prayer together and burn the pieces of paper as a sign of your turning it over to God.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

What old habit or trait would you like to change about yourself? How have you tried to change? How can you work at change in the future?