

**St. Matthew the Apostle Church**  
**335 Dover Chester Road**  
**Randolph, NJ 07869**

January 8, 2021

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! It has already been a “fun” year for us, or so it seems. During this week’s daily mass from St. John, we have been reminded of the call to Love. St. John the Evangelist in his letters and Gospel, tends to focus on that call. After mass on Tuesday, I engaged in a conversation with someone about the word love. The word love, in English is overused and has lost its true definition. If you talk to someone about something you like, you very well may use love as the adjective to describe something, your children/grandchildren the same thing. They love chicken nuggets or macaroni and cheese. They love (insert tv show name) or the music of ... I do not argue that the emotional attachment to these things is great, but do we love food as much as we love our parents or our spouse or even God?

This was the conversation that I ended up having after mass on Tuesday. For us, we have one word for love. Yet the meaning of love that we see in scripture in the Greek translations, and for the individual I was speaking with, the Polish language, showcases that there are more words to define love than what we use in English. In Greek, there are at least five different words for “love.” The love one feels for friends is *philía*. The love one feels for one’s family is *storge*. The love one might feel for one’s betrothed is *eros*. A fourth kind of love, *philautia*, the love one feels for oneself. The fifth kind of love, *agape*—at least in its Greco-Christian usage—refers to a transcendent kind of love, a higher form of love commonly conceived as the love of God for man, and that of man for God.

When we talk about the sacrifice of Christ for us, it refers to that final love or *agape*, the love God has for us. It should be recognized as the highest but does not miss the other types of love that are out there. Right now, as much as I was planning on talking about *agape*, what we have been seeing over the past few days, weeks, and months has pushed me to want to talk about another version of love. That being *philia and storge*, the love we have for our friends and family. I am not talking about the actions of what we witnessed on Wednesday, which no matter how one tries to justify them were horrible. We are not going to talk about the arguments for one version or another of the election results, because once we go down that rabbit hole, we will do or say things that we may regret later.

Instead, I am talking about what we, as followers of the Gospel and as Christians need to be reminded of, LOVE. In his letter to the Corinthians St. Paul tells us, “Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, [love] is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” Right now, we

need to be reminded of how essential it is to show love to all. We can disagree about things and still love someone. Our political beliefs can vary, yet we can still love someone. Sure, we may want them to be the same as us, we may want them to align politically with us. We can have a discussion with someone and hope to get them to change their minds, but if they do not we can still love them.

A world of love, a world of respect and tolerance is something that we are called to bring about. It is not always easy to love others. Christ never told us it would be easy, yet it is something we are called to do. In the coming days, weeks, and months I encourage you to look at how you define the word love. Look at the explanations of the different types of love and choose to bring those into the world. There can be no room for hatred in our world, otherwise the evil one has won. Most people came into this new year with expectations that things will be better. They can be. WE need to enact that change in the world. We cannot be passive watchers, especially if that is what we normally do. Be a witness to the Gospel, be a witness of your faith. Bring love into all you do and see the changes we can make in the world.

God Bless,  
Fr. Brian