Dear Parishioners,

We are ready to reopen on Monday, May 18. From what I am hearing from the responses that my calling ministry have shared, there is a great amount of excitement and relief in the air. However, I continue to ask for your patience and understanding as in first few weeks there will be inevitable hiccups in our signup system, check in system, and process of cleaning required. But these growing pains will establish a smooth process especially when we are able to increase our 25-limit number at each Mass in the future.

Again, I want to reiterate that Archbishop Sample will continue the Sunday Mass Obligation dispensation especially for those who are vulnerable and not comfortable to gather in public groups. Pleased be assured there is no worry and anxiety of missing Mass. Archbishop Sample will continue to live stream Mass at 11:00am on Sundays or you can watch Mass on EWTN and participate in a spiritual communion. Finally, as soon as hospitals, care facilities, foster homes and nursing homes are allowed visitors, we will once again be able to bring holy communion to the homebound.

Now, onto this weekend’s Gospel passage from John who records Jesus saying: “If you love me you will keep my commandments.” In order to understand his instructions, it is important that we place this statement in its proper context. What do I mean by this?

Prior to the Last Supper, Jesus tells his disciples, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another... as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” He follows up these words by making it his meaning crystal clear, when he washes the disciples’ feet at the Last Supper and tells them: “As I have done for you, so you must do for others.”

Jesus’ teaching is so clear. When you say you love someone, you follow up those words by doing something so mundane and humbling as washing their feet, you serve them and place their needs before your own first.

At the heart of his teaching is this simple lesson: what you DO is more important than what you SAY. Or put another way, as we often hear, “actions speak louder than words.” The kind of love which Jesus is asking us to live by and not just say is termed “agape”. In Greek, “agape” is an attitude, a decision of the heart to put another’s interest before self-interest. It’s a willingness to sacrifice for another.

My favorite story that illustrates this is from John Cardinal Neumann, a convert to the faith and contemporary saint. He once wrote:

A man spoke with the Lord about heaven and hell. “I will show you hell,” said the Lord, and they went into a room, which had a large pot of stew in the middle of it. The smell was delicious, but around the pot sat desperate people, gaunt and emaciated like you see on children in UNICEF commercials on TV, all of them starving. All were holding spoons with very long handles, which reached, into the pot, but because the handle of the spoon was longer than their arms, it was impossible to get the stew into their mouths. The suffering was terrible!
“Now I will show you heaven,” said the Lord, and they went into another room identical to the first one. There was a similar pot of delicious stew and the people had the same long-handled spoons, but they were all well nourished, animated and happy. At first the man did not understand. “It’s simple,” said the Lord. “You see, they have learned to feed each other!”

In short, the Gospel invites us to reflect upon how we can to do a better job of practicing what we preach. So, let’s not only talk about love, but show it in our deeds of loving God and loving our neighbor!

Blessings,
Fr. Michael
17 May 2020