

5th Sunday of Easter- C2

ACTS 14:21-27; REVELATION 21:1-5A; JOHN 13:31-35

Homilies are vehicles for breaking open the Word of God. First read the Sunday readings at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/042813.cfm>

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Most of the world's religions teach something akin to the Golden Rule.

In Christianity: *In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you.*" i

Elsewhere: *What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor..*" ii

And also elsewhere: *Not one of you truly believes until you wish for others what you wish for yourself.*" iii

We all can know this through natural law. As St. Thomas Aquinas said,

The natural law is nothing other than the light of understanding placed in us by God; through it we know what we must do and what we must avoid. God has given this light or law at the creation." iv

And yet, Jesus has taken this common law of morality and revealed so much more.

Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another." v

This love was made incarnate in Jesus.

When asked what must be done to inherit eternal life, Jesus said,

You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." vi

In today's Gospel, we hear Jesus' command given at the Last Supper.

This new mandate, this *Mandatum Novum*, lends its name to the traditional calling of Holy Thursday as Maundy Thursday.

This is the commandment given whereby we are to serve and love others just like Jesus does as he demonstrated that night in the washing of others' feet.

I am able to love because, *he first loved us.*" vii

And with that...I am to love you.

Jesus' example is to *lay down my life for the sheep.*" viii

Where do I find that example?

How do I learn to *lay down my life*" for others?

I was tutored in that through the nurturing of my dear parents, God rest their souls.

My mother was a true model of laying her life down for others, day in and day out.

My father, my World War II vet, modeled the courage and character necessary to put another's life ahead of one's own, even at the risk of death.

It is because of *their* love that I can even imagine what God's love must be.

I've also experienced that love elsewhere—someone else's choice to risk all for my welfare.

I was a young police officer on patrol on a summer midnight shift.

We got a call of a disturbance at the 7 C's, a bar in the 200 block of E.

Patterson, only around a mile from here.

Officer Ron Lee and I responded.

Ron had been my training officer when I was a rookie and so we knew how to follow each other's moves.

We arrived and found a crowd of around 50 out in the street.

Five or six were fighting with the crowd gathered around egging them on.

Some buddies were trying to separate the fighters and as one friend pinned his buddy's arms to drag him away another combatant sucker-punched the guy.

My partner, Ron, grabbed that assailant and took him to the ground wrapping him up like a cocoon.

Good job, Ron. That only left me with the other 49....

I stood straddled over Ron and his prisoner as others were kicking at Ron and trying to free their buddy.

I took a little pounding, too.

I called out a Code 20; that means officer in danger.

I could hear the sirens in the distance.

I was sure they'd be there in 4 minutes, but time drags on in that kind of situation— it seemed forever.

I think I called out a Code 20 a couple more times. It was getting dicey.

The first to arrive was Deputy Ken Colby from the Sheriff's Department.

He's a big guy and he sliced through the crowd to get to me and Ron.

The second to arrive shortly after was Officer Cam Kooy, my best friend.

Jan and I are Godparents to his kids.

Ken and Cam got involved with a couple others fighting and that relieved the crowd pressing in on Ron and me.
Ken took a chain hit across his face and Cam took a chain strike to his throat. Both recovered later in the ER.

Within seconds a dozen more officers and deputies from all area agencies responded: City, County, Township, Western & Portage.
A few were taken to jail and the others split.

Ken and Cam risked it all to rescue me and Ron.
I knew it then... and I live that now.

Jesus told us:

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."^{ix}

Has anyone sacrificed in love for you?
I'd like to give you 5 seconds of quiet to think of that person who sacrificed for your good and your welfare.
Think about them for 5 seconds.

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Doesn't their sacrifice inspire you to share that type of love with others?

Because of Ken and Cam, I was inspired to be a better cop.
Because of my Mom and Dad, I am inspired to be a better man.
Because of Jesus, I am inspired to follow Jesus in his act of sacrificial love.

Jesus modeled this for us on the way to the cross.
It was in the Garden when he prayed,
Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done... He was in such agony and he prayed so fervently that his sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground."^x

It was right after this that Jesus was arrested.

Again, as a former police officer, I have a particular take on that scene.
I have arrested many a person, bound their hands and took them before the authorities.

The person that I am about to arrest has a few options before I affect the arrest.

They can run and try to get away (and sometimes they did).
There are situations when they could recant what they are doing and be let go with a warning.

But once the cuffs go on, the arrestee does not have any more options.
His freedom to choose is gone.
He is going downtown.

Now Jesus, being God Incarnate, had demonstrated repeatedly his power over nature in his miracles, healing and raising of the dead.
As such, could Jesus have stopped his arrest, trial, scourging and crucifixion at any time?

When Pilate asked, Jesus answered,
My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom did belong to this world, my attendants [would] be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not here."^{xi}

Looking at this with cop s eyes, I see Jesus moment of truth, his time of decision, to be there in the Garden.
He pleaded with the Father, but chose to follow the Father s will.
It was there that he chose to respond, to sacrifice in love for your danger call, the looming danger of eternal death for all mankind.

He risked all; He gave all ...for love of you.

It was with that love that death itself was conquered.
That love is the source of all life and all being.

That is how Jesus loves us. And that is how we are to love each other.

We come to this altar to celebrate that love.
We come into communion, together... into the very presence of Christ... to live in that love and to share that **love and life** with all we meet.

Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another."^{xii}

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- i Matthew 7:12
- ii Hillel, *Talmud, Shabbath 31a*
- iii The Prophet Muhammad, *Haddith*
- iv *Dec. praec. I.*
- v John 13:34
- vi Luke 10:27
- vii 1 John 4:19
- viii John 10:15
- ix John 15: 13
- x Luke 22: 42, 44
- xi John 18:36
- xii John 13:34