

Wednesday after Epiphany Sunday 2021
<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/010621.cfm>

1 John 4:11-18

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another.

*No one has ever seen God.
Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us.*

This is how we know that we remain in him and he in us, that he has given us of his Spirit.

Moreover, we have seen and testify that the Father sent his Son as savior of the world.

Whoever acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he in God.

We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us.

God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.

In this is love brought to perfection among us, that we have confidence on the day of judgment because as he is, so are we in this world.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment, and so one who fears is not yet perfect in love.

Psalm 72:1-2, 10, 12-13

*R. Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.
O God, with your judgment endow the king,
and with your justice, the king's son;
He shall govern your people with justice
and your afflicted ones with judgment.*

The kings of Tarshish and the Isles shall offer gifts;

the kings of Arabia and Seba shall bring tribute.

*For he shall rescue the poor when he cries out,
and the afflicted when he has no one to help him.
He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor;
the lives of the poor he shall save.*

Mark 6:45-52

After the five thousand had eaten and were satisfied, Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and precede him to the other side toward Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. And when he had taken leave of them, he went off to the mountain to pray.

When it was evening, the boat was far out on the sea and he was alone on shore.

Then he saw that they were tossed about while rowing, for the wind was against them.

About the fourth watch of the night, he came toward them walking on the sea.

He meant to pass by them. But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out.

They had all seen him and were terrified. But at once he spoke with them, "Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid!"

He got into the boat with them and the wind died down.

They were completely astounded. They had not understood the incident of the loaves.

On the contrary, their hearts were hardened.

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On this Wednesday after Epiphany may I share my joy with you in our continued celebration of Christmas, the nativity of our Lord and his revelation to the Magi, in His baptism and at the wedding in Cana.

But wait! Today is January 6. This is the day that Christian cultures across the world exchange Christmas gifts. That's because for centuries January 6 has been the day when Epiphany was celebrated.

Excuse the confusion for a very good reason. Epiphany is such an important event and message for the faithful that Church leadership empowered national episcopal conferences to move the celebration of Epiphany to a Sunday, when all the faithful would be participating.

We celebrate Epiphany on Sunday in the U.S.; and a wonderful Epiphany Sunday it was. May I share an equally wonderful homily (not mine) that helped me experience Emmanuel, God-is-with-us:

<https://d2y1pz2y630308.cloudfront.net/19941/documents/2021/1/frank%20-%202021%20The%20Epiphany%20of%20the%20Lord.pdf>

With thanks to Deacon Frank for the above homily, may I continue with our celebration today as the Wednesday after Epiphany Sunday.



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1 John

God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him. There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear.

Mark

When they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out. They had all seen him and were terrified. But at once he spoke with them, "Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid!"

Fear and Love. Fear squeezes out love and love leaves no room for fear. We've experienced when fear and love were in a tug-of-war to claim us.

Our illustration helps us appreciate the fear that the disciples must have felt when they were being tossed about in a storm on the Sea of Galilee. And yet a more attentive reading of Scripture shows us that it was not the tossing of the sea which caused the disciples to cry out. It was the seeming apparition of Jesus walking upon water that terrified them. They thought they were seeing a ghost. As veteran fisherman, they've been caught on the water in turbulent storms before. Facing a ghost, they were confronted with an unknown reality more terrifying than the threat of drowning.

Now Jesus had meant to pass them by, but in seeing his beloved disciples in such terrified distress, in love, he turned to attend to them. He called out, *"Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid!" He got into the boat with them and the wind died down.*

How do we know that Jesus' love for them stilled their hearts? Because the wind died down.

Whose love stilled their hearts? Jesus called out, *"It is I."* In the original Greek, Jesus proclaimed, *"ego eimi"* ... the great tetragrammaton expressed in Hebrew consonants as *"Yhwh"*. This is the great *"I am"* of God identifying himself to Moses in the burning bush.ⁱ

So, it wasn't exactly Jesus calling out to his buddies, Peter, Andrew, James and John, "Hey, guys! It's just me, Jesus." That might have reassured his disciples he wasn't a ghost (although not quite explaining the walking on water thing). But, it was Jesus proclaiming his true identity, his divine identity, that even the wind and the waves would obey. This is a demonstration of God's love in quelling the chaos of the waters, a theme found in Genesis and throughout the Old Testament.

Can one see that when we say, *God is love*, we are using "love" not as a description, but as a term of identity? Our First Letter of John goes on to show that the very identity of God is the same as our care and sacrifice for each other: *Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another.* First John goes on to say, *and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him. There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear.*

Remember those times of your life when you were afraid. You have survived them, maybe with deep scars and enduring grief. Jesus offers hope and healing. He offers his very self—love. Despite a world that often threatens our very existence, God offers himself. *God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.*

Yet my very existence is not constrained by the bounds of earth and time. For us to remain in God, here and now, is to taste our eternity.

I do not minimize the despair and misery we may experience on earth. When we are in that position, we are encouraged to reach up to the extended hand of love. When we are not in that position, we are to be God's extended hand of love.

We are called to remember that while we travail this valley of tears, us poor little faithful were made for eternity. Here, we are dominated by the power, brightness and magnitude of the sun. Yet, we know our sun will someday burn out.

We exist on a middling planet in a middling galaxy on the edge of the universe, yet sometime, every star we now see in the sky will burn out.

Do you realize, that in the hope of Jesus' promise, you and I will see every star burn out, others born and we will witness them burn out. You and I were built for eternity. Just imagine what our conversations will sound like on the other side. While I'm in no hurry to depart this plane, I do look forward to that time when you and I will remain in God's love forever.

We are called to carry His cross in sacrificial love. We are to join ourselves to Christ in his passion death and... and in his resurrection. Remaining in God's love, where is there room for fear?

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ⁱ Leslie J. Hoppe, OFM; *Weekday Homily Helps*, January 6, 2021,