

Sixth Sunday of Easter May 9, 2021

Sometimes, I think the most misused word in the English language is “love.” We have all heard people say: “I love Starbucks coffee; I love that song; I love that movie; I love chocolate ice cream; don’t you just love how she wears her hair”; and on and on and on! The word “love” is so misused I often wonder if we really know what it means at all. We seem to use the word “love” for just about anything.

Interesting to note that in the bible “there are four major words for love: AGAPE, PHILEO, EROS, and STERGO. There are also a number of variations of these words such as AGAPETOS, ASTORGOS, KATAPHILEO, PHILADELPHIA, PHILANTHROPIA, PHILEMA, PHILIA, PHILOS, PHILOSTORGOS. AGAPE is the most common word for love in the New Testament. It occurs 259 times as a verb or as a noun.” (neverthirsty.org)

What do you ask, does the word agape mean? Agape describes love that is total, committed, unconditional and even sacrificial. Agape looks toward giving rather than getting. Agape, a very special love, is the type of love Jesus is referring to in today’s Gospel. “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.” Jesus felt the love of his Father at all times. Immersed in love, in the total giving of the Father to the Son, Jesus in turn loves us in the same way. Jesus loves us when we are angry, hurt, jealous, upset, confused, discouraged and downright unlovable.

Jesus is telling us that he loves us no matter what and that we need to love others no matter what. Can we love those who hurt us, anger us, gossip about us, or turn their backs on us? Can we love those whom we think of as outcasts in our community? Can we support and love all people without passing judgment on them? Remember, agape looks toward giving rather than getting! How much are you prepared to give?

Easy to give love when things are going well. What about in times of difficulty? Jesus says “no one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” Could you give up your own way of life to support a sick friend or family member? I think about care givers who give so much of their time taking care of a loved one who can no longer take care of themselves.

I love to be near water (yes I said love), especially the ocean. Being near the water has a calming effect on me. Watching the endless waves that keep on coming to the shore, is a reminder; this is how God loves me. His love never stops. As I swim in the water, I think, this is what it is like to be immersed in the love of Jesus. Just relax, stay calm, and float. Let the water support you. This too is the love of Jesus. Just relax, let his love support you. Jesus never lets you go. Remember, we did not choose Jesus, he chose us!

Reflection by Julie de Gouw, Pastoral Minister

