

TRINITY NEWS

Easter VI The Upper Room Discourses of Jesus in the Gospel of John at 15:9-17

The upper room discourses in John chapters 13-17 have often been seen as compositions of the writer of the Fourth Gospel rather than the literal words from Christ in that upper room. My own view is that John has captured very well the essence of Jesus' thought and verbal reflections about his relationship with *Abba* and with his disciples. This writer is also our only source of these wider conversations in that Upper Room in Jerusalem before the death of Christ. There is the notion of the *Paraclete*, a word that has a number of translations that try to bring out its essential meaning. It is obvious that Christ is reflecting very deeply in the Upper Room about his connection with God and how God connects with us. The Holy Spirit, "The Other Jesus" after the Ascension of Christ Jesus, plays an essential part in these discourses. So does *agape*, the packed word about love. *Agape* seems to combine something of the Jewish notion of *hesed*, "steadfast loving kindness", and *ahavah*, the usual word for love" in Hebrew.

The focus on love in the writings of John has deep significance at this time because of distorted views of God that are being paraded falsely in the world. We ourselves have no right to throw stones because often we have forgotten the grave admonition in the writings of John that **whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love** (1 John 4:8). The marker for love for us is the person of Jesus of Nazareth in the way in which he demonstrated love in his life. He asked us to do nothing that he was not prepared to do entirely himself. The claim that **God IS love** (1 John 4:16) is of huge importance. Without love we can have no real wisdom. We would be like someone drowning in his or her own ignorance trying to get to the surface in order to see the clear light of day and find wisdom. The first reasoned act of wisdom is to discover love and how to implement it. We seem to be able to discover it, but implementing it is more difficult. Love is not possible without depth of feeling and our feelings can wreck our capacity to reason acutely and clearly, as has often been observed. But without feeling love becomes empty and disabled.

“The great love of God has been revealed in the Son who came to this earth to redeem everyone” are the words of a brief but lovely hymn. The words in the Upper Room discourses and the perceptive words in I John combine to weave a tapestry of meanings and concepts about Love that link up with the poetic words about love in I Corinthians 13.

Love that is real puts us in touch with the Spirit of Jesus which is absolute love expressed on earth through human channels. A mother grieving for a daughter who has been wounded in love, and a father consoling his son who has been broken in a relationship, remind us of that love. Love between a couple that transcends cultures and find security and peace in “mixed matches” is another example. Another radiant example is when someone loves God so much that they become visibly one of the happiest people on earth. Love is giving and receiving in a flow that only poets can describe in written words. Taking and demanding and possession are not love but selfishness parading in a false mask of so-called love. It is self-hatred imposed on someone else. The Paraclete, the Comforter cries out in love, giving voice to Christ’s love for all of us. Love is unselfish and it requires a response that is entranced with the well being of the Other. Jesus loved us so much that he never left us. He sent the Comforter to remind us every day of his love.

Bishop Arthur Jones

THIS WEEK:

Wednesday, May 13.

- Bible study, 10 a.m.
- Group discussion, 7:30pm, Parish office.

Thursday, May 14.

- Midweek Eucharist, 10:00am, Chapel

NEXT WEEK’S READINGS:

Acts 1:15-26; Psalm 68; 1 John 5:9-15; John 17:11b-19
