

5 Easter B

“We know love by this that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another.” 1 John 3:16

What are the commandments of Jesus?

In 1925, evangelist, J.S. McConnell compiled and published the commandments of Jesus in 21 groupings of seven he called principles. From this copy and its comments provided by his son John, Founder of Earth Day, the 147 commandments would take more than a year of Sunday School lessons to cover them all.

In this morning's gospel passage Jesus addresses one lone commandment: “If you love me you will keep my commandments.” What a mouthful Jesus shares with us today. Yet the two greatest commandments known as the Golden Rule remain as the focus of all his teaching.

What does it take to prove our love for the one who laid down his life for us? If we take a serious look at Loving God and loving our neighbor as these two commandments require we will find some answers.

The first answer is given to us by Jesus himself: if we love, or attempt to love we are given the Holy Spirit, the Advocate. To keep Jesus commandments and love him will require the Holy Spirit living, guiding and teaching his people. No Spirit no love. If there is no love among God's people, the Spirit of God is not present. The two are plainly inseparable.

On this mother's day a lot of quotes about mom are passed. The quotes of famous people tell us something similar to the gospel message:

If I am thy child, O God, it is because Thou gavest me such a mother.
– St. Augustine.

All that I am or hope to be I owe to my angel mother. I remember my mother's prayers and they always have followed me. They have clung to me all my life. – Abraham Lincoln

The most important thing a father can do for his children is love their mother. – Henry Ward Beecher

Motherhood: all love begins and ends there. –Robert Browning

Is my mother my friend? I would have to say, first of all she is my Mother, with a capital 'M'; she's something sacred to me. I love her dearly...yes, she is also a good friend, someone I can talk openly with if I want to. - Sophia Loren

Once Mother Teresa was asked about the biggest honor ever bestowed upon her. Everybody expected her answer to be the Noble Prize, but she replied that the title of 'Mother' was the biggest honor she had ever received.

- People are unreasonable, illogical and self-centered. Love them anyway.
- It is not the magnitude of our actions but the amount of love that is put into them that matters.
- In the developed countries there is a poverty of intimacy, a poverty of spirit, of loneliness, of lack of love. There is no greater sickness in the world today than that one.

Love and motherhood equally share a place in the hearts of these writers and in the words of our Lord. In John, Jesus farewell to his disciples speaks of mother church and her distinguishing mark: the love of one's brother or sister in Christ.

If this condition is met (i.e., if the church loves Jesus and thus keep his commandments), then Jesus pledges that he will ask the Father for “another Advocate” who will remain with them forever (14:16).

This indwelling entity is explicitly called in the next verse the “Spirit of truth” (14:17). This Paraclete, as the Holy Spirit is called in the Greek, is mentioned four times in the Last Supper Discourse and once in 1 John. While Jesus refers to himself as a Paraclete it is clear that he refers to the Holy Spirit who will function as a teacher, specifically to remind the community about the words of Jesus (14:26); he will bear

witness concerning Jesus (15:26); and he will bring to light the faults of the world (16:7-11).

Those are the functions of motherhood: teaching words to live by, pointing us to God and telling us to watch out for the ways of the world. The Holy Spirit, our mother, passes on this responsibility to Mother Church. The business of the church therefore is no less than to powerfully show the world how true love is lived out.

Samuel Truett Cathy was born in Eaton, Georgia, in 1921, the sixth of seven children. As a kid he helped his mother run a boarding house and at the same time delivered newspapers and operated his own business selling soft drinks. After high school, he served in the army, then opened a tiny restaurant - the Dwarf Grill (later renamed the Dwarf House) - with his brother.

Cathy, however, is best known as the founder of Chick-fil-A, a fast-food chain. He opened the first Chick-fil-A restaurant in Atlanta in 1967 and the chain now has nearly 975 restaurants and more than 40,000 restaurant employees. Cathy is also the founder of both the WinShape Centre Foundation, which helps students succeed through scholarships, youth-support programs, and a long-term care program for foster children. His favorite truism is "It's easier to build boys and girls than to mend men and women."

So in 2000 Chick-Fil-a became the national sponsor of Core Essentials, an educational program that gives teachers and parents tools for imparting key values to elementary-age boys and girls. By teaching inner beliefs and attitudes such as honesty, patience, respect, orderliness and courage, Core Essentials helps children treat others right, make smart decisions, and maximize their potential. The entire program teaches 27 values over a three-year period.

Woody Faulk, an orphan, personally knows of this emphasis on character development. Mr. Cathy put Woody to work, and is now a vice president of the firm. He says everyone knows that Sam Cathy personifies James 1:22: "Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."

“If you love me you will keep my commandments,” Jesus said. God help us to make that a reality in our lives everyday. And may Mother Church be for us a place where the love of Jesus is known. AMEN