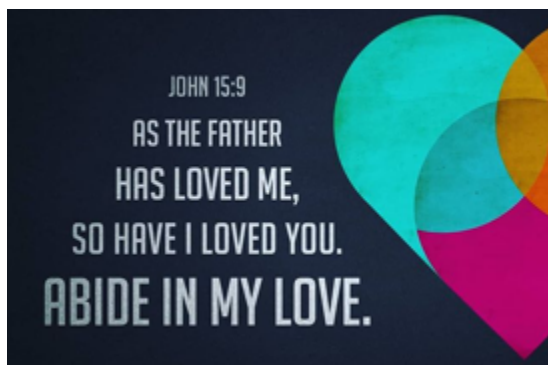


“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.”

(Jn 15:9-11)



A renowned doctor addressed to his students; “I have been doctor for four decades and I can vouch with my experience that love heals, love restores life and love is the best medicine I have for my patients.” Then one of the students asked, what if it does not work? The doctor replied; double the dose.

Though, short Gospel but powerful and packed with life giving messages. First, we have the **Invitation** of Jesus, then the **Command** of Jesus which leads to

Promise of Jesus.

First, the **Invitation of Jesus** is to “**abide in His love.**” It’s a personal invitation from Jesus to each one of us; “as the father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.” It’s a calling that can never be neglected if one needs to be saved. Elizabeth Barrett Browning writes in her poetry; “How do I love thee? Let me count the ways. I love thee with the breath, smiles, tears, of my life; and if God choose, I shall but love thee better after death.” I would say the same that love is the only way to love Jesus, in other words true love is from our whole being, from the very depth of our life. God’s love towards Jesus is demanding, full of presence and promise, rich in public displays of God’s power. It prunes, cleans, molds, forms, challenges and supports Jesus in his ministry. This is the love of Jesus Christ in which we are invited to abide. Abide is to **be connected** to Jesus. Just as the branch is connected to the vine, so we need to be connected to Jesus. Cut off from the vine, the branch has not life in itself but even without the branch the vine can live. Branch lives only because of the sap that it gets from the vine, so too we get life from Jesus. Baptism reminds us that we are grafted in Jesus, hence that life that we have is from Jesus, and we are made new creation in and through Him. Abide also means to be in **constant communion** with Jesus in order to build oneself and the community. Jesus Himself on earth was in constant communion with the Father. There was mutual relationship between them and the mutual relationship of the Father, Son and disciple community is very important. We learn this from our seraphic father St. Francis of Assisi himself that he lived a life of total communion with the Trinitarian God. He lived in a strong love with Jesus and in intense prayer life that reflected in his relationship with the creation as he called them his brothers and sisters. What does it show for the modern families who are on constant attack? It only shows that when a family prays together, stays together. God has to be the first priority for each family. He needs to be the hub to which all other activities of each family are connected.

Second, there is the **Command of Jesus** because abiding is not only the state of mind and spirit. Jesus emphatically says the road of abiding consists in keeping his commandments, “if you keep



my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love." Jesus urges his disciples to do this since He has kept His Father's commandments to the point of His death. The command is focused and specific, "Love one another as I have loved you." The word 'keep' is verb, that means it calls us for action, it means love in service. It is a call to obedience to

Jesus. In this digital world the great challenge to it is that we become disobedient children. We live in "I age or I era" with Imax, iMac, iPhone, iPod, iPad and finally we say I paid for it. I, Me and Mine mentality is in conflict with obedience to Jesus. Ego destroys our relationship with others and ego is edging God out of one's life. In the words of Frank Sinatra; "I've lived a life that's full. I've traveled each and every highway, and more, much more than this- I did it my way." This is the mentality that we are in today's world, we want to do it "my way" but not the ways that God shows us through His beloved Son Jesus. And that's why we fall short in establishing a mutual relationship with our fellow humans and creation. St. Francis of Assisi did live his life according to God's ways. He said, Lord what do you want me to do? And from there he walked the ways God showed to him. He kept the commandment of love. Look at his encounter with the enemy of the Christian world Sultan Malik Al Kamil; he brought peace instead of war and friendship instead of enmity. It was possible only because he was in total love and communion with the Divine. He allowed the Divine to show and guide his way. Families and fraternities have to do the same, allow the Divine to show and guide the way.

Third, finally the **Promise of Jesus**; His invitation to abide in His love and keep the commandments result to reward; "my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." This joy comes from the perfect obedience and from surrender of self at the abiding of love of Jesus. Again, remember the story of "Perfect joy" in the life of St. Francis of Assisi. For St. Francis it was possible to endure hardships, rejection and insults by his own brother porter at the door. He bore the injuries with patience and joy, thinking of the sufferings of our Blessed Lord, which we would share out of love for Him. He remained in love and peace, only because of his strong loving relationship with the Crucified one. This is the kind of perfect joy Jesus promises to us when we abide and keep His love.

OFS, we are called to *abide in Jesus* and *keep His love* in our daily life and that will bring *Perfect Joy* in our lives...so let's do it **Jesus' way**...