

Homily  
May 18, 2025  
5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter  
26:20 – 36:33

There are three words in the English language that will stir the heart and the mind:

**I love you.**

It stirs you, doesn't it? Especially if someone says it out of great affection. But it also stirs us, my brothers and sisters, when it is not out of affection, but out of – beyond the emotion – when something is difficult. And still and all they say, "I love you. No matter. I love you."

Now in Latin, it's "Ego te amor." In German, it's "Ich liebe dich." In French, it's "Je t'aime." Wilfredo, Como se dice in Espanol, "I love you." (Louder...) *My sister Mary and I had an argument yesterday about whether or not I need hearing aids.* (Laughter) "Te Quiero," means I like you. "Te ammo."

No matter the language, they stir the heart.

Jesus says in the Gospel, "Love one another." He says, "I give you a new Commandment." Well, Jesus, that same Commandment is in Leviticus Chapter 19, Verse 18: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Now that was meant for the Jewish people to love each other. It didn't apply at that time to the neighbor beyond. We know that Jesus changed that. Especially in Matthew's Gospel account, when he said: "Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you and hurt you." He universalizes it, and makes it in both the Gospel of John and the Gospel of Matthew, **central** to the reality of following Christ.

Now, I've said before and I truly believe this, that **love is a decision**.

Stephanie, I am sure Donald irritates the heck out of you sometimes, right? Well, yeah. And today is your 57<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary? (Applause) There are times when your love for Donald is a decision, isn't it? Yeah. Because it's not the emotion. It's the commitment. The seeing in that person dignity and hope and the faults. And it doesn't matter. It just irritates.

"Love one another as I have loved you," is unique because he goes on to say, "as I have loved you." Do it the way I did. Which is sacrificial. Which is giving over.

But I would suggest today, my brothers and sisters, that we focus a bit more on how loving another is about their dignity, their worth, and our common humanity.

Recently, Pope Leo was speaking to journalists who had covered all of Holy Week, the death of Pope Francis, the period of mourning, then the Conclave and the election.

He spoke to them in this way:

“Today, one of the most important challenges is to promote communication that can bring us out of the Tower of Babel in which we sometimes find ourselves, out of the confusion of loveless languages that are often ideological or partisan. Therefore, your service as journalists with the words you use and the style you adopt is crucial.

As you know communication is not only the transmission of information, but it is also the creation of a culture of human and digital environments that become spaces for dialogue and discussion.”

A few paragraphs later, he stated:

“I repeat to you today the invitation made by Pope Francis in his message for this year’s World Day of Social Communications. He said, ‘Let us disarm communication of all prejudice and resentment, fanaticism and even hatred. Let us free it from aggression. We do not need loud, forceful communications,’ he says, ‘but rather communication that is capable of listening and of gathering the voices of the weak, who have no voice. Let us disarm words and we will help to disarm the world. Disarmed and disarming communication allows us to share different views of the world and to act in a manner consistent with our human dignity.’”

That, my brothers and sisters, is the **law of love** through our words. And we know the power of words, don’t we? They can lead to very positive attitudes, actions, desires, or they can lead the other direction.

“Love one another as I have loved you.” It is the call of the Lord to us all. We are the disciples in this setting in John’s Gospel. Remember, the Beloved Disciple was there at that point. This is right before the Final Discourse, the final farewell in Chapters 14 and 17.

And scripture scholars make it clear that the Beloved Disciple is the Church, the People of God.

So it is addressed to us. I would urge us, my brothers and sisters, to examine how we use words. Do they convey love, respect, dignity? Or are they destructive, demeaning, diminishing, violent? And secondly, I would urge us to hold each other responsible for how we speak.

If we hear someone we know using destructive words, find a way to urge them to speak another way. Either in person, online, whatever. And my brothers and sisters, with that, let us hold all those who

serve us – and it doesn't matter what political party, what position they have, it doesn't matter --- hold them responsible for their words. Tell them, that's not what you need to be saying. And in that, as Jesus' disciples, truly we will show how to "love one another as I have loved you."