



Jesus said to his disciples: "As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: love one another."

Introductory Prayer: Lord, as I begin this prayer I offer you my whole self: my thoughts, desires, decisions, actions, hopes, fears, weaknesses, failures and petty successes. I open my entire being to you, aware that you know everything already. I'm certain of your mercy and of the purifying power of your penetrating, loving gaze.

Petition: Jesus, let me fulfill your command of charity.

1. The Depths of Jesus' Love: Jesus makes a startling comparison: He likens his love for his disciples with the immense love his Father has for him. Before even the world came to be, the Father and the Son were immersed in boundless, mutual love. The Holy Spirit is this bond of love. The intimacy of the union and self-giving of the Blessed Trinity surpasses any human comparison, and yet Our Lord tells his disciples he loves them in a like manner. Do I realize how deeply my Savior loves me? Does the truth of Christ's personal love for me, proven from the height of the cross, fill me with awe and find an ever more generous response in my spiritual life?

2. Demands of Friendship: The circumstances and timing surrounding Jesus' designation of his disciples as friends reiterates the authenticity of the title. Jesus is just a few hours away from being abandoned and betrayed by those he now calls friends. Still, Our Lord is so moved by love that he looks beyond his followers' betrayal, to the victory he is about to win for them. Jesus also offers me his friendship. He invites me to "remain in his love." I am not called to be a spectator, but to discover the joy found in accompanying him. To follow the "Crucified One" will always be demanding, but his friendship is a treasure which far surpasses the weight of the cross.

3. Badge of Love: The mutual love of the Father and the Son, which Jesus gratuitously extends to us as his friends, should bear fruit in charity. The first Christians took very seriously Christ's command of charity. It was their distinctive mark. It set them apart from the peoples among whom they lived. It was the magnetic force that attracted so many to join their ranks. The command to love each other is the logical result of our personal worth as people loved by the Lord. If Jesus loves my brother or sister so much that he gave his life for him or her, can there be any excuse for me not to show respect and deference on their behalf? Charity is the badge of every true Christian. How can I better live Christ's commandment of love, starting within my own family?

Conversation with Christ: Jesus, I pray that I will never cease to be astonished by the depths of your personal love for me. You call me your friend even though I have not always lived up to the demands of this calling. I want to be a better and truer friend of yours.

Resolution: I will show a simple act of kindness to a member of my family today.