

The Fifth Sunday of Easter
St. John 13:31-35
May 19th, 2019
St. George's Bolton
Fr. Chris

Love

They will know we are Christians by our love. I would like to be known by my love, but love is not an easy enterprise. I may be more known for my failings in the life long school of love. But I keep trying.

So, I have a confession to make: I really enjoy Hallmark movies. They are a great, stress-free way to unwind at the end of some stress-filled and long days. These movies are all about love, my favorite passion. First, there is the meet cute. Then there is the relationship tension that keeps them apart, or by chance some contrived contention that breaks them apart. In the end, we know they will get together and then this moment is full of happiness, rejoicing and most of all, love. Then the Hollywood assumption is that they will live happily ever after.

Some would say that this is all too saccharin, that it does not reflect true-to-life experience. Then someone like me will say, "Love is hard work." This makes the whole enterprise sound arduous. Why would anyone want to get mixed up in a loving relationship? Better yet, why would anyone want to think about loving others in this world, when it is tough enough to love the one you're with, as the Sixties Rock song by Crosby, Stills and Nash used to say:

"Love The One You're With"

If you're down and confused
And you don't remember who you're talking to
Concentration slip away
Because your baby is so far away

Well there's a rose in a fisted glove
And the eagle flies with the dove
And if you can't be with the one you love, honey
Love the one you're with

Don't be angry - don't be sad
Don't sit crying over good times you've had

There's a girl right next to you
And she's just waiting for something to do

Well there's a rose in a fisted glove
And the eagle flies with the dove
And if you can't be with the one you love honey
Love the one you're with

Turn your heartache right into joy
'Cause she's a girl and you're a boy
Get it together come on make it nice
You ain't gonna need any more advice

Well there's a rose in a fisted glove
And the eagle flies with the dove
And if you can't be with the one you love, honey
Love the one you're with

When I hear these words in the song, I often think, I am the one I am with. Better yet, how hard is it to even love yourself sometimes? We are often our own harshest judges and find little redeeming to think about ourselves. Who would love me, when I feel so unlovable?

Well let's back up to the place where we started this morning. The one who loves you no matter what, the one who unconditionally loves you is God, even when you can't love yourself, and you find it hard to love others.

Love isn't hard work. It is often pleasant and very rewarding when you love others around you, I mean really love them. What is the hard work is getting our-own-selves out of the way!

There is no mystery about getting in the way. The big "I" so full of himself, has no time to see and think of others who I bump into during the day. The big "I" gets in the way of seeing my friends and family and loving them and listening to their needs. Who is the big I? Me!

- What I am doing is more important.
- What I want is more urgent than anything going on around me.
- What I want to say is more important than listening to others.
- What I want indeed becomes an all-consuming focus.
- What I need is more important than opening my eyes to see the needs of others all around me.

You get the picture. The big "I" gets in the way almost every time. And if I

am in the way, I can never 'love the one I am with' other than me. And that is not love, because love flows out to others! Love is not solipsistic!

The hard work is getting the "I" out of the way, and putting a big "YOU" there in place of it. This is love, when you matter more than I do. Once you make a start of it, it gets easier with time. Love the one you are with!

Jesus always showed a focus upon others. Jesus does love the ones he is with, from little children seeking His blessing, to those who seek Him out lying on a pallet desiring healing and hope. Love others as I have loved you. "Just as I have loved you, you ought to love one another." It's pretty simple, not rocket science. Be lovers as you have been loved and love the one you are with. Then others will guess you might be a real Christian.
AMEN