

## 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter: The New Commandment of 'Love'

I give you a new commandment, "love one another as I have loved you".

The word "new" belongs to that restricted number of magic words that always evoke positive feelings. "Breaking news," "new pope," "new school", "new job", "new home," *The new* makes news. Why do we like the *new* so much? It is not only because the new, the unused, generally *works better*. The true reason is that the new, that is still unknown, unexperienced, leaves more room for expectation, surprise, hope, and dreams. And happiness is a natural product of these.

The Gospel is called "**good news**" precisely because it contains the best-news, the news-par excellence, ever new.

Now, let us draw near to the content of the Gospel. A question arises immediately: Why is a commandment that was already known in the Old Testament (cf. Lev. 19:18) called "new"? John, the same Evangelist, writes in another place (1 Jn 2:7) "Children, I do not propose to you a new commandment, but an ancient one. Nevertheless, it is a new commandment about which I write to you". Is it new or an ancient one? It is both.

And what is new about this 'New commandment'? To love God and to love my neighbor is always the most important commandment in the whole bible. Loving the neighbor in general means, the *good deeds*. But I think, what Christ is commanding here is 'the respect', the way how we Christians deal with each other, the unity- UNITY IN SPIRIT.

Unity does not mean we all have to think the same. The role model for the Christian unity is the *unity between the Father and the Son*, which many passages of St. John's gospel speak about. It is a unity that preserves the difference. The Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Father. And it is this *Unity in Spirit*, which is the role model for our conduct, our dealings with each other. Even when we have different opinions, which can be discussed and talked about.

Every healthy society lives with people with different opinions. This same concept applies to the Church. If I am strong enough to allow someone to question my opinion, I have the chance of learning from different opinions, I have the chance of clarifying my opinions. I also have the chance to be more firm in my opinion.

Therefore, different opinions are not a threat to unity. On the contrary, they are an enrichment to the unity. But what is important that we deal respectfully with each other and each other's opinions.

For this, **grace** is necessary. And in fact, it was not when Jesus formulated the commandment of love during his life that it became a new commandment but when, *dying on the cross and giving us the Holy Spirit, he makes us able to love each other by infusing in us the love he has for everyone.*

Therefore, Jesus' commandment is new in an active and dynamic sense, because it "**renews**," makes new, and transform everything. Paul affirms: He who is in Christ is a "New Creation" "*Behold, I make all things new.*" (Rev.21.5) "And this love renews us, rendering us new persons, singers of a new song" (St. Augustine). Amen.