

“Love One Another”
May 21, 2006
by Fr. Aidan McAleenan

One of the foci of John’s gospel is coming to belief. It is the gospel of love. If you love, then the gospel is clearly telling us, you are of God and you are in God and you are doing what God wants you to do, even those people who love and are not Christian. One of our great theologians, Karl Rahner, calls these souls “anonymous Christians.” If you love, the Gospel is telling us, that is the core. That is the reality. That is the heart of Christ, love.

A bunch of scientists get together and they decide God is redundant. So they set up a meeting with God and they all get together and have this little meeting and God appears, and they are standing there and they say, “God, we don’t need you anymore because we as scientists can do everything you can do. We can split the atom. We can bring light to parts of the world where it is dark. We can do everything. So, we don’t really need you. God said, “Oh, really?” We can even take that dirt and bring life from it. “Huh! OK, well let me see that.” says God. So one of the guys leans down and picks up the dirt, and God says, “Get your own dirt.”

It’s very simple. Isn’t it? Every atom, every single element known and unknown to infinity and beyond interiorly, is part of God. And so it is in the light of that gospel, in the light of this gospel of love, this God that sends us his only son who does what the father says, who binds himself on the cross. He goes to the command. He comes here and he’s telling us today it’s very easy. All you’ve got to do is love one another. And yet, sometimes, we find that so difficult. Don’t we? I think that’s where our sin comes, where we don’t do that.

Yesterday, I was at the ordination in our diocese, Bishop Allan Vigneron, our Pastor, our Shepherd, ordained three young men. Well actually, they’re not so young! Jim Sullivan is 52. He’s the only white American. He’s from near Sacramento and he’s for our diocese and he is going out to Dan Danielson down in Pleasanton. And then Lee Chompoochan (I can’t even pronounce Lee’s name. He’s from Thailand.) who, I think is going out to Pinole. And then Peter Son Vo who is Vietnamese is going out to St. Bonaventure. There’s a moment in the ordination rite where the three ordinati are lying on the floor. It’s a very powerful moment. I remember, last year. It just seems like a whisper ago that I pulled in here to Brian and went upstairs. It was the evening before the festival started. I set my two boxes upstairs in my room and I came down and said goodbye to Brian and “I’ll see you in a few weeks.” I went home to Ireland to be ordained. So it’s just one year and, as I listened to the Bishop, I realized as I placed myself watching these three young men on the floor prostrating themselves before God, giving that God their fiat, just as the Blessed Mother said when the Angel Gabriel appeared, “Let it be done unto me according

to your word.” It is a moment that is full of tremendous emotion. I think there was a big puddle. I think I cried the entire time, thinking of all of the saints of the Church, all of the people you love are right here at this moment and they are calling this love and this gift unto you.

And then the Bishop says, “Remember this day because there will be many days in your ministry when it won’t just be like that, where everybody is just lauding you.” And there have been days, since I have come to Christ the King, that have been a bit like that. It’s like God has said, “Aidan, I would like to send you,” and I said, “God, could you send somebody else? But I really don’t feel like it today.” I think within the first two weeks here in the parish, and I have the permission of the family who are involved in this particular story, (I tell you it anonymously.) but I was about to say Mass. Brian was gone. The other Brian was gone as well. It was a few minutes before a Mass with about five hundred people here, a funeral Mass, and to be honest with you, in the beginning, you are very nervous about everything you do, and you have seen all the mistakes I have made in that first year. So, that’s OK. So, I was about to go out, and this man called. He was in a terrible state. I could hear roaring and crying in the background. He says, “Father, you need to come over to my house. There has been a terrible thing that has happened.” And I said, “Well, I’ve got five hundred people in the Church, out for a funeral Mass. I have to go bury this man, but I’ll get there.” I said, “Did somebody die? It sounds like something really horrible is happening.” And he says, “Well we have just discovered abuse in our family and we’re just so distraught, we need somebody here.” So, needless to say, at the funeral I was a little preoccupied all the way and I got to the door of the house and I stood up and I looked up at the sky and I said, “God, what in seminary life, what in my life has prepared me for this?” And nothing really had. Later, I realized my life experience, working in homeless housing... had prepared me. Afterwards, thinking of it, there was a lot that prepared me. But when I walked into this house, the sheer volatility.... The feelings were running really high. And somehow or other, the grace of the Holy Spirit was with me. This is when I realized it’s about God. It’s about love. It’s about compassion. And we sat down and we talked and some of the family members went outside and I talked to them individually, and then I talked to the perpetrator and then I talked to each of them. I think I was there for about three hours, and the entire time, I couldn’t tell you where all of the stuff came out of my mouth because I realized it was sheer gift of the Holy Spirit. It was the gift of love and it was the gift of experience of life. That young person is doing time in jail now. I had to make a mandatory child reporting deal. Brian Joyce that night was reading the report and saying, “...And what did you do next? And what did you do next? And what did you say next?” I said, “Did I do something wrong?!” And he goes, “No. I’ve never done this before.” He’s been doing it for forty-three years. So, there’s a real experience of joy, of gift and God providing for the moment.

I think one of the major things is preaching the gospel of love, preaching that love and doing it at whatever cost. The joke at the beginning was placed very strategically, at the beginning because this is the God of the Universe. This is the God of love. This is the God that gives us his son. He calls us “Brother” (“Sister”) in the gospel. He has no borders and he has no partiality. We are all brothers and sisters. Now, that’s the place I preach the gospel from and that’s what I am trying to do. And I think that’s what we need to do. And we know that we are loved. The gospel is telling

us so. We hear it here Sunday after Sunday. We hear it particularly here in this Easter season. We celebrate it and then we take the God of love into us. And then the Gospel says we keep that God and we become what we consume and we take that out into the world and we become the most loving and caring people that we can possibly be. The God of love.....

The other night at our Christ Light preparation, one of our men was telling us that his daughter was about to have a baby and after about a month they thought they had lost the baby, and everybody prayed and they just all came together as a family and it's one of those times when you are just on your knees in prayer. You want this to be right. The next week, his daughter went back to the doctor and the baby was fine. Eight months later, the baby was born. Two weeks ago (The little girl is three years old.) she looked at her mum and, out of nowhere, she said, "Mommy, God wanted me to be born so that I could love you and you could love me." From the mouths of babes comes the reality that God loves us. And at times we forget about this love. But the gospel constantly reminds us of this wonderful gift of love that is an experience, and should be experienced. That's what we celebrate today. We celebrate the gift of a loving God! So let the Church say "Alleluia!" (Response from the congregation: "Alleluia!") One more for the Holy Spirit! Alleluia! ("Alleluia" again in response.) Let us all stand and pray together.