

## Scripture Reading

### A Reading from the Gospel according to John (John 13:35)

By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another. The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

### Reflection – Love God above all, then our love for others can become unconditional

**True love is from God.** Love is no mere sentiment. It does not arise from a person's own goodness but it is poured into every heart by the action of the Holy Spirit. *And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us (Romans 5:5).* The Holy Spirit is always working within us to sanctify us. Do we open our hearts to cooperate freely with God's graces? Out of love, God created us to share His love, to love Him and to love others for the sake of Him. Thus, a most natural human need is to be loved, and a most natural human response is to love. Without receiving or giving love, a soul is not complete and is vulnerable to all kinds of sins.

**God commands us to love Him above all** (cf. Mt 22:37, Lk 10:27, Mk 12:30). God is our highest good. He alone deserves all our love. However, God is God even without our love. Although God has no need of our love, in His infinite wisdom He commands us to love Him above all so that we can become perfect like Him and share His glory and joy for eternity. Thus, in commanding us to love Him above all, God points out to us a path that leads to our eternal happiness. Because He gives us freewill and an intellect, we are free to choose life or death, salvation or condemnation, to follow God's will or our own. In commanding us to love Him with all our heart, mind, strength and soul, He has given us a good example to imitate: Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son whose life on earth is a living testament of how we should love. *Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends (John 15:13).*

**Loving God empowers us to love others unconditionally.** How can we love God Whom we cannot see? *Jesus answers: If you love Me, keep My commands (John 14:15).* Thus, love is no mere sentiment but obedience to the will of God. *"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work (John 4:34).* Walking in the footsteps of Christ, we too should live to do the will of God. This is the true and highest purpose of our life. It guarantees the final fulfillment into our true self: to be transformed into the likeness of Christ and to share His joy and glory. *A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another (John 13:34).* At the Last Supper, Jesus gives us the command to love one another in the way that He loves us. Thus, Jesus wants us to love others unconditionally, for His sake, imitating the way He loves us.

**Love for others can run dry if it is not motivated by love for God.** Our feelings constantly change. If we are led by our feelings, our love for others can run dry in times when others show they do not deserve it or our love is repudiated despite our good intentions. In a true love relationship, Jesus is always in the centre for He said: whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of Mine, you did for Me (cf. Matthew 25:40). In a true love relationship, love never tire or run dry for the Holy Spirit is continually refilling the heart with God's love. Thus, Jesus says: But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Matthew 5:44). Turning one's cheek when one is slapped on the other is absolute folly according to human wisdom which does not understand the unsurpassing power of God's grace which has produced countless saints, acknowledged and unacknowledged, who did more than merely turning the other cheek for the sake of God.

**Conversation with Jesus:** Precious Lord, You are love itself. Out of love, You created me. You gave me a heart to receive Your love, to return Your love and to love You in others. My highest mission and purpose is to love You and You in others. Through Your Holy Spirit, fill my heart with love and compassion so that I can love others as You love me. This is Your command. May my love never be dependent on reciprocal love from others or their behaviour or attitudes. May I show my love for You by loving others unconditionally for Your sake, out of obedience to Your command: If You love Me, keep My command (cf. John 14:15). In loving others unconditionally for Your sake, I will be transformed into my true self in the truth and righteousness of God. True love is loving God, my Highest Good, above all else for Himself only and not for His gifts, and seeing Him and loving Him in others. May true love be my object, my means, my purpose, my mission. You are love, and in living in love, God's Kingdom will reign in my heart. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.