

You have to wonder what is new about this Commandment. Old, old Moses in the Ten Commandments related that we should love God in the first five, and in the second five, love your neighbor. Jesus said this commandment is new. He did more than say it. He lived it and He showed it, a kind of no matter what it costs even if the world thinks it's humiliating, even if you get nothing back from it, that kind of love. A completely different standard of love than the world has ever known. He used a very rare and different word for love. He used the Greek, "agape," very rarely used at this time in the history of all writing during the period when Jesus lived.

When popular writers of Jesus' time wrote of love, they mostly used the word "Eros." Most of you know what Eros means. Erotic, lustful. The kind of love that men were used to hearing about. Sex and passion and desire. Most still use the word love in English to mean anything but about what Jesus was talking. Most still use the word love as an excuse to control or to dominate or to be irresponsible or to just get what you want. Even little children, when you say no you can't have that toy, "Oh, but I love you, don't you love me?" You see? Agape is loving not counting the cost to me and not counting whether you will ever give me anything pleasant in return. A different word! It means to serve instead of use one another.

On the night that He gave this sign, He took that towel and wrapped it around Him, and took the water basin, and He knelt before them and washed their feet, a low-down, servant's job. It was the job of a servant, who didn't have the aptitude to do anything better than that! The lowest, least trainable, least valuable servant washed feet, and Jesus said, "I, your Master, am washing your feet. You might not understand it now, but later you will." It's much later. I hope we do.

Peter was indignant, but finally he allowed, and later he understood. We still have the same problem, counting some people and some people's deeds worth more than others, some people worth more than others, some love more desirable than others, and some more worthy of being loved. This is not what Jesus is trying to teach.

How much more can you give to others than your life? He gave Himself in service. He gave Himself on the cross. Jesus' servant love is not the uncontrollable, all-consuming, impulsive, using others. It was instead serving and kneeling and washing and giving of Himself. He came not as a king on high to be served, but to serve others and to give His life, His very life as a ransom for our souls. He showed His love as giving, not taking.

Finally, the Commandment really is new because we as Christians have a new reason to love. We are to love each other because we know that God loved us first, and to forgive one another because we know that God has already forgiven us! To serve one another and to be generous and compassionate to one another, to be kind to one another because God in Christ has been all those things unto us.

God's love in Jesus has no limits. It is a love that never quits, a love that can forgive and receive even enemies, a love that listens and hears and binds and heals and fills up,

Maundy Thursday Homily
The Reverend James D. Dennis, Jr.
Thursday, April 5, 2007

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encourages and strengthens, and when we do those things, we are echoing the love of Christ. He said to do it always in every situation.

I challenge you tonight to ask yourselves at home with family, with spouse, with friends, at work, and even with enemies, “Am I doing the loving thing as Jesus commanded?” Reflect tonight. If you wish to serve God, and if you’re here tonight, I believe that you do, am I doing the loving thing in the relationships where I am, where I publicly claim to follow Christ, am I doing the loving thing that Christ has commanded? Am I loving in a servant way? Am I loving in an agape way? Not counting the cost.

Love is the sign that God is in this church, and love is the sign that God’s spirit is in our hearts. By this, said Jesus, everyone will know that you are my disciples. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples, that you have love for another. Let us show that He lives in us. Let us love as He has loved us. A new Commandment Christ has given us. Amen.