

A reflection on John 15:9-17 from Sacred Space

Some thoughts on today's scripture

As I read these moving words of Jesus, I dwell on his love and care for his friends. He wants above all to reassure them of his love which, as they will soon see, cannot be greater. I realise that these words are also addressed to me, in all my weakness and uncertainty. I ask for God's help that my love will be like that of Jesus, that I may be ready to give myself for others.

You are my friends if you do what I command you. This sounds like a strange statement, but on second thoughts I realise it makes sense, for that is my experience. I find myself spontaneously doing what pleases my friend, not because I am afraid of losing their friendship or because I want to appear good in their eyes, but just because we are friends. I have called you friends, not servants. I relish these beautiful words, with deep gratitude.

The core of the Christian message is love, God loves me! How is it to sit with this reality? If we could grasp God's unconditional love for us, life would be radically a journey of joy. To accept that God loves me is also to accept the reality that God loves all others in the same way. I am called to love myself and others, and it is clear from the Gospel that I am called to love the poor, the excluded, and the marginalised in a special way.

A person blind from birth cannot understand colour. A person who has never been loved can find love a baffling word. I feel I have an inkling of love's meaning, but how? Whose love was it that taught me the meaning of the word? What do I know about the sort of self giving that is unearned, unquestioning, looking for no return?

My love for others must not be conditioned by how they respond. Jesus loves me totally, whether I am good or bad or indifferent. My love must have that quality too. This is costly love – it could demand my very life!

This costly love will bear rich fruit, whether I see it or not. Just so, Jesus' love bears fruit only after his death. I must not be discouraged when my love seems to be wasted. True love never comes to an end (1 Corinthians 13:8). Loving actions are the building blocks of eternal life.