Friday of the Fifth Week of Easter

Gospel text (*Jn* 15:12-17): Jesus said to his disciples, “This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: love one another.”

“This is my commandment: love one another as I love you”

Fr. Carles ELÍAS i Cao
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today the Lord invites us to fraternal love: "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12), that is, as you have seen me do and as you will still see me do. Jesus speaks to you as a friend, for he has told you that the Father calls you, that he wants you to be an apostle, and that he destines you to bear fruit, a fruit that is manifested in love. Saint John Chrysostom says: "If love were spread everywhere, a multitude of good things would spring from it."

To love is to give one's life. Spouses know this when, because they love one another, they make a reciprocal gift of their lives and assume the responsibility of being parents, also accepting the self-denial and sacrifice of their time and being for those they must care for, protect, educate, and form as persons. Missionaries know this when they give their lives for the Gospel, with the same Christian spirit of sacrifice and self-denial. And religious, priests, and bishops know this; every disciple of Jesus who commits himself to the Savior knows this.

Jesus told you a little earlier what the requirement of love is, of bearing fruit: "unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit" (Jn 12:24). Jesus invites you to lose your life, to give it to Him without fear, to die to yourself so that you can love your brother with the love of Christ, with supernatural love. Jesus invites you to attain an active, beneficial, and concrete love; this is how the Apostle James understood it when he said: "If a brother or sister is naked and deprived of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' and you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith, if it does not have works, is dead indeed" (Jas 2:15-17).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “If you seek the example of love: Greater love than this no man has, than to lay down his life for his friends. Such a man was Christ on the cross. And if he gave his life for us, then it should not be difficult to bear whatever hardships arise for his sake” (Saint Thomas Aquinas)

- “His death on the Cross is the culmination of that turning of God against himself in which he gives himself in order to raise man up and save him. It is there that this truth can be contemplated. It is from there that our definition of love must begin. In this contemplation the Christian discovers the path along which his life and love must move” (Benedict XVI)

- “By embracing in his human heart the Father's love for men, Jesus ‘loved them to the end’ (Jn 13:1), for ‘greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends’ (Jn 15:13). In suffering and death his humanity became the free and perfect instrument of his divine love which desires the salvation of men. Indeed, out of love for his Father and for men, Jesus freely accepted his Passion and death” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, № 609)