

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Many of us are getting used to the need to take a Rapid Antigen Test before we visit an aged care facility. Those working in the health industry or those who are teachers regularly need to take such a test. To see just one red line appear is very reassuring. Another kind of testing has been happening in our schools this week. Students in many year levels have been sitting for the NAPLAN tests.

You and I are tested every day for something more serious than COVID or our ability to read or write or work with numbers. You and I are tested each day for how well we have chosen to follow Jesus. The test is in our willingness to love as he loves. It is the love that we have for one another that marks us out as followers of Jesus. It is when we love one another that people will know that we are disciples of the Lord.

What amazes me about what we hear Jesus saying in today's gospel is the context in which he says these things. Judas, one of his closest companions, had just left the room to seek out the ones to whom he could betray Jesus. John tells us that darkness had fallen. But Jesus doesn't see what Judas is doing with any bitterness. He sees this as the moment when the glory that belongs to him as God is about to be revealed. We come across that word "glory" often in the scriptures. It stirs up in us an

image of light and mystery. It is this thing that helps us to know that God is there. Perhaps we should be thinking of God's glory as the breaking upon us of the love that God has for his Son, the presence of God's own spirit of love. We can only get a glimpse of that love in this life, even though we are surrounded by it. When we are called to meet God in heaven and look upon his face, then we will begin to really see the glory of God.

Jesus tells us "Now has the Son of Man been glorified, and in him God has been glorified." The depth of the love that Jesus has for his Father will soon be made known. The whole of humanity will be caught up in that love. Jesus will draw us into that intimate union that he has with his Father. In Jesus the whole of humanity is reconciled to God and to one another.

Jesus shares what is in the depth of his heart with those who are his closest companions. He calls them his children because they share the very life of God. "My little children I shall not be with you much longer." He is going to be with his Father in heaven. But he promises to return and stay with us. He will soon send his Spirit of love to live within us.

"I give you a new commandment: love one another; just as I have loved you, you also must love one another." Being commanded to love is not something that sits

easily with us. Loving can only be done freely. What helps me to understand the force of what Jesus is saying is when I compare it to coming to understand a truth that compels me to act. When I see a car bearing down upon me, then I know that I must get out of its way. When I see a fly in my soup then I must take it out. When I walk into a room at night, I must put on the light to be able to see where I am going. I do all those things freely, but I am compelled to do them.

When we become aware of the love that our God has for us, then we cannot but love God in return. When we understand how much love God has shared with us then we are compelled to share that love with others. The love that we share with others then becomes the sign that marks us out as disciples of Jesus. We don't just imitate Jesus. We allow the love Jesus has for us to flow out to others. We allow the power of his Spirit of love to be at work in and through us.

Until we know the love that Jesus has for us then we do not know what we can offer to others. The deeper our relationship with Jesus, the more connected we become with others in our world. It was no doubt that deep relationship with Jesus that drove Paul and Barnabas to be missionaries as we read in the Acts of the Apostles. When we are filled with God's Spirit of love then we can be a source of encouragement to others as they were.

Our beautiful reading from the Book of the Apocalypse today speaks about God creating a new heaven and a new earth. That new heaven and new earth is able to come about when people like us allow God's love to transform us. "You see this city. Here God lives among humans. He will make his home among them. They will be his people and he will be their God."

May our prayer today be to ask our God to use us in whatever way he needs to make the whole of creation new.