

Father O'Connor's Homily for 15 May 2022
Fifth Sunday of Easter – C

Acts of the Apostles 14: 21-27

Revelation 21: 1-5a

John 13: 31-33a, 34-35

There are some things that mothers say today that mothers have probably been saying since the beginning of time. Here is a list of things that mothers in the Bible might have said to their children:

“Noah, no! You can't keep them! I told you not to bring home any more strays.”

“Abraham, would you stop wandering around the countryside and get home on time for dinner?”

“David, I told you not to play with that slingshot in the house. Now go practice your harp. Your father and I are paying good money for those music lessons.”

“Judas, have you been going through my purse again?”

Today mothers – and fathers – are quite likely repeating what parents throughout the ages have been saying. And the subject that is at the top of the list is “love.”

And so it is with Jesus who teaches us about love in today's Gospel. The scene is the Last Supper, and Jesus gives His apostles – and us – some final advice: “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” [John 13: 34-35].

What does Jesus' love look like? How can we imitate His love for us in our own lives?

Jesus' love for us keeps us safe and secure, no matter what is going on around us. His love does not run hot and cold. We never have to worry that Jesus will ever stop loving us. We can depend upon Him to keep us safe and secure. And that is the kind of love that Jesus wants us to imitate in our own relationships.

There is a group of senior women in Chicago who call themselves “Grandma, please.” They volunteer to be at a telephone for children to call who come home from school to an empty house. The children can tell them

about their day, about their worries, or just connect with someone who will listen.

One senior says that very often the calls that she receives end with: “I love you, Grandma. Would you please tell me your name?”

Every child needs to know that they are loved. In fact, we all need to know this, no matter what our age. Why are we loved? Because we are beloved children of our Heavenly Father. And Jesus-the-Son-of-God’s love for us is always with us, keeping us safe and secure.

Jesus’ love for us is also supportive. Jesus is not out to burst our bubbles or dash our dreams. He wants us to become “the best versions of ourselves.” He helps us live as people of hope: seeing the glass half-full rather than half-empty. And Jesus wants us to build-up people around us.

An experienced basketball coach had a rather unusual way of encouraging his players. If a star player scored a slew of points, the coach would simply say: “Nice job. Great game.” But if someone was really struggling and scored just one basket, the coach would make a big fuss over that player.

One of his best players said to him: “Coach, why is it that when I make the winning shot at the end of a game, all you say to me is ‘Nice job. Great game’? But you make such a fuss over all the weaker players.”

The coach answered: “When you make that winning shot, you have already had a lot of people cheering for you all-game-long. I need to go out to that player who doesn’t get any regular cheering. That person really needs my support.”

Isn’t that what we need to do too: to go out to people who don’t get any regular cheering and give them some of our encouragement? Like Jesus’s love for us, our love needs to be supportive of others.

And in Jesus we see love that is self-sacrificing. He gave His all for us, and that is the kind of love we are to imitate.

A man tells about an experience involving his wife and their daughter who was expecting her first child. The daughter was asking her mother if, after she delivered, she would ever get her slender shape back again.

Her mother then showed her the scars from her three C-sections and told her: “Each of these three scars is a trophy of my love for each one of you in bringing you into the world. I am so glad that each of you was born.”

The man says that he too now sees his wife’s scars in a totally new way. They are the marks of her self-sacrificing love for their children.

On this Fifth Sunday of Easter when we look at Jesus risen from the dead, He still has the scars of the nails in His hands and feet, and the mark of the spear in His side. They are trophies of His self-sacrificing love for us. He gave His all for us.

Jesus did not just tell us to love. He showed us how by His own example: a love that keeps us safe and secure, that is supportive, and that is self-sacrificing.

And so Jesus says to us today: “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” [John 13: 34-35].

Great verses to live by. Great verses to love by.