

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

Today's Gospel speaks to us of the love of Jesus. Jesus says to us, "**As the Father loves me, so I also love you**" (John 15:9). Have you thought about what this means? Think about it for a minute: God – the eternal Father, the first person of the Blessed Trinity – loves Jesus – the eternal Son, the second person of the Blessed Trinity – with a perfect, self-giving love. He loves Him for all eternity. He loves with a completely non-selfish love. He pours Himself out perfectly to the Son. The Son (Jesus), is perfect with no flaws or sins, and receives that love perfectly. Throughout all eternity, they mutually share that perfect love.

Now that you've pondered a bit how the Father loves Jesus, now ponder this part – Jesus loves us with that same love, "**As the Father loves me, so I also love you.**" *Whoa!* We are flawed, sinful humans. We are broken. We often reject God's love and say that we would rather live our own lives. By our sins, we nail Jesus to the Cross. Yet, He says that He loves us with that perfect love, *as much as* the Father loves Him! This should blow our minds. We are not worthy of this love, yet He gives it freely. We do nothing to deserve it, yet, He refuses us nothing.

The whole of the Christian moral life (the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, and everything else) is a response to this love; it is living in the love of Almighty God.

So, here's the big question: HOW DO WE, HOW DO YOU RESPOND?

We are called to enter into this love relationship with God, to give our whole heart and mind and strength and soul to Him. This is not about giving ourselves over to an ideology, philosophy, or doctrine – we are to give ourselves over to a person – Jesus – who loves us more powerfully, or intimately, more tenderly, more dearly than any other person we have ever met, or ever will meet.

One little girl, in response to God's love, wrote Him love letters. Venerable Antoinette (Nennolina) Meo lived in the 1930s in Italy. She suffered terribly by patiently with cancer at the age of five, lost a leg, and died before she turned seven. At five and a half, she dictated love letters to Jesus through her mother. Rare is it that the Church looks to someone so young to be a saint, but the Church is looking at her to see if she is. Let's read a couple of her letters to Jesus.

Dear Jesus, today I'm going walking and I'm going to my nuns and I will tell them that I want to make First Communion at Christmas... Jesus, come soon into my heart, that I will hold you very, very tight and I will kiss you! Oh Jesus, I want you to remain always in my heart. A greeting and a kiss from your

Antoinetta (Sep 15, 1936)

Dear Crucified Jesus,

I really wish You well and I love You so much. I want to be on Calvary with You and I suffer with joy because I know how to be on Calvary. Dear Jesus, Thanks that You have sent me this illness because it's a way to arrive in Paradise. Dear Jesus, tell God the Father that I love him so much, Him too. Dear Jesus, I want to be Your lamp and Your lily dear Jesus, dear Jesus give me the strength necessary to stand the pains that I offer for sinners [at that moment she was taken to vomiting].

Dear Jesus, tell the Holy Spirit to illuminate me with love and fill me with His seven gifts. Dear Jesus, tell the Madonnina [Mary] that I love her so much and that I want to be with her on Calvary because I want to be Your victim of love dear Jesus. ...

Dear Jesus, I send you lots of greetings and kisses.

Antoinetta of Jesus (May 2, 1937)

Two love letters – simple, but full of her heart. At six years old, she was writing to Jesus how she wanted to console Him through *her* pain. May we truly surrender our lives over to His infinite love, as this little girl has!