

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This weekend's Gospel speaks incredible, impossible things! There are many things in our faith that we may think to be hard sayings or impossible commands. I have mentioned before the impossibility of the command to love your enemies (see Matthew 5:44). There are so many others: **"Everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart"** (Matt. 5:28); **"Offer no resistance to one who is evil"** (Matt 5:39); **"Do not worry about tomorrow"** (Matt 6:34)... and these are just from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel. With all of Jesus' commands – and all of the commandments of God – about the way we should live, about not divorcing, about not judging, etc., we might very well overlook the incredibly impossible commandment that Jesus gives us in today's Gospel. This is the New Commandment Jesus gives us:

I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. (John 13:34)

Did you catch that?

Jesus tells us that *as He has loved us so we are to love one another*. It seems innocuous, and yet this is the most impossible commandment. How much did Jesus love us? He loved us to death; and not just to death, but to the most agonizing, painful death on the cross. He loved us even when we were enemies. He loved us even more than He loved Himself. All the commands about loving your neighbor as yourself or even loving your enemies pale in comparison to this New Commandment. In fact, later in this same conversation with His disciples, Jesus says, **"As the Father loves me, so I also love you"** (John 15:9). Jesus loves us as much as the eternal Father loves the eternal Son in the perfect love embrace of the Most Holy Trinity. This overwhelming, never-ending, head-over-heels, reckless love of God for you, for me, should shape everything in our lives. If we truly knew how much we are loved, how much we are valued, how much we are worth, we would never look to other things to find our worth or purpose. We wouldn't need to try to "be somebody," since, because of this infinite love of God for us, we already *are*. We wouldn't struggle with thinking we are not good enough or beautiful enough or strong enough or talented enough or rich enough, since we would know how much we are valued, how much we are loved. It is impossible to overestimate our value to God!

Are you getting the picture? Words can't describe this incredible love of God, and the effects it has on our lives... so I'm trying my best to use superlatives! Jesus loves us that much... **AND HE COMMANDS US TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER WITH THAT SAME LOVE.**

Impossible!

Yet, this is Jesus' commandment. If you're feeling completely inadequate, good; you're getting the idea. This truly *is* an impossible task.

Here's the Good News: while we cannot do this on our own, Jesus gives us what we need to love with this kind of love. Jesus Himself has not only modelled this love for us, but He has given us His very Spirit (the Holy Spirit), who is the love between the Father and the Son. God gave us this Spirit at Baptism and we have but to stir it up! We need to ask the Holy Spirit to help us to love with this love. I truly believe that when we ask (with trust in God) for the help we need to fulfill the impossible commandments of God, He will give it to us. In fact, I would say that *He* will do it in us. We have but to *borrow His love*, which He gives freely, so that we can love others as He loves.

On this holy Easter day, let ask our Lord for the grace to know how much we are loved by Him. May He pour such an abundance of that love into us – and may we be so open to receive it – that we freely pour that selfless, self-giving love to others, truly *doing the impossible* – loving others as Christ has loved us.