6 Easter B

May 6, 2018

St. Patrick’s

What would have happened if the church lost the Bible? I’m not talking about now—with the Internet, and the Scriptures so plentiful in print and on the web. But, what about—let’s say in those first centuries of the church, with no printing press and the Scriptures on papyrus manuscripts?

It’s that one perfect verse found only in St. John’s First Letter. We heard it this morning. **“God is love,”** it says (4:8). In fact, about the year 400 one of the church’s greatest theologians, St. Augustine, wrote that if nothing else were said of love in the rest of the Bible, “and we had heard from the mouth of the Spirit of God only that one statement, ‘God is love,’ we would not have to look for anything else” (1).

And St. John, in his letter, doesn’t make love a “flimsy feeling.” Listen, again:  **“In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that God loved us and sent his Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins.”**

St. Patrick’s: Once we truly experience how much this Jesus loves us, then—*then!—*we’ll live out that love. As we are the branches joined to the vine, it’s the sap that runs through our souls, and it will blossom beautifully in our care for, and love of, others.

Perhaps surprisingly, in St. John’s Gospel nowhere does Jesus talk about the Ten Commandments. It’s not that the Gospel doesn’t believe in them. Instead, the Gospel comes to the heart of the matter. Yes, here’s the one, clear command in the Fourth Gospel (2). It’s when Jesus tells us: ***“Abide in my love, make your home in my love.”*** If we abide in his love, then by osmosis, we’ll love one another.

 **“God is love.”** Not a God finger-pointing, condemning, tallying up the bad stuff we’ve done, and ready—even eager—to hurl us into hell. **“God is love.”** If we truly *experience* that love, *then* we’ll show that love in “small gestures…as saints next door” (in the words of Pope Francis’ in his recent exhortation). We won’t give up on making up and taking the extra step, because Jesus hasn’t given up on us, whom he sees as his **“friends.”**

A wise man among the Indians was asked by his grandson about the conflict and angry discord in the world today. The elder reflected for a moment and then replied, “My child, there are two dogs battling within my heart. One is full of anger, hate and rage. The other is full of love, forgiveness, and peace.” The old man paused, and he and his grandson sat for a moment in silence. Finally the boy spoke, “Grandfather, which dog will win the battle in your heart? The one filled with hatred or the one filled with love?” The old man looked at his grandson and replied, “The one I feed will win.”

St. Patrick’s: Feed on Jesus and his love. They will win within us.

1. In Epistolam 7,4; SC 75, 320; quoted by Raymond E. Brown, S.S., The Epistles of John (Garden City, NY: 1982), pg. 550.
2. See Raymond E. Brown, S.S., The Gospel according to John (xiii-xxi), (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1970), pg. 663: “(E.A.)Abbott…says that this ‘is perhaps the nearest approach to an authoritative command (in John) to obey a moral or spiritual precept.’”

***General Intercessions***

***May 6, 2018 6th Sunday of Easter***

**Lead us, as Jesus’ friends, to be his disciples in service of others—those in our families and close to us, and those vulnerable in our midst; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Give joy to our girls and boys celebrating this Sunday their First Communion, that they may always know Jesus’ love for them; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Fashion our St. Patrick Parish under the example of Mary, whom we especially remember during this month of May, that we might carry our your will as faithfully as did she; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Encourage those who suffer from discouragement and lack of support; those who are sick or lonely; those who are rejected; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Welcome into your Easter light all who have gone before us in faith, especially Cash Shields and Diane Woodbury; we pray to you, O Lord—**