

Today's Gospel is a short passage with a big message.

Jesus has washed the feet of the disciples and is preparing them to carry on His ministry, after he is gone—and this short passage with a big message is the “new commandment” Jesus gives his followers to embody.

But it turns out the commandment to “love one another” was not new at all.

The commandment to love goes back much further than Jesus of Nazareth. Before Jesus spoke the commandment in that last night with the disciples, it was rehearsed throughout the Jewish tradition. Many of the disciples knew it, read it, heard it, prayed it.

The commandment to love one another was familiar to them—old, not new—that is until the qualifying phrase: “As I have loved you....”

Now that part was new—**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.**

Short passage with a big message. An old commandment with a new meaning.

Take the love I've shown you, in my forgiveness, in my walking with you, in my death on the cross and extend it to the people around you. Every day. In every interaction. To every creature in every place. Take the love you've known through me, and give it away again and again and again.

And your life and the lives of those around you can't help but point to God and God's Way of Love.

That doesn't mean it is easy.

You and I don't have to think long or hard to know the places in our lives in which love is hard to come by— but in the disciples' best moments and ours, we remember how we are supposed to love even when... or especially when love is difficult—we remember the new part of the new commandment: “Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.”

Our first reading shows us some of the fruits of such love. Paul and Barnabas have traveled through many Gentile cities with strange names and, by their love **for** Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit, people witnessed, in them, that same love... poured out upon them.

And it was transformative. Churches were established, that is, groups of people became catechised, baptised and the imperative to “love one another” was taken up.

It is within this framework of Christian love that the “new heaven and new earth” John speaks about in the second reading takes form and shape and is still being built brick by brick, love by love.

St. Jerome, one of the Doctors of the Church, wrote about how John in his old age would remind those around him to love one another. When he was

asked why he said this so often, he replied, **“Because it is what our Lord commanded. If it is all you do, it is enough.”**

Love is certainly a feeling, an emotion, but in this quote we are reminded it is also an action. We do love when our actions are loving. And when we do love for someone we find hard to love... love forms and grows in us.

A short passage with a big commandment. An old commandment with a new meaning. A new meaning that love is a verb.

Living the way Jesus lived, Choosing love even when love is hard.
Extending love when people are unlovely. Taking the love God has for you and pouring it out, giving love away again and again.