

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

Our Lord has nothing to hide.
He doesn't play political power games—He's no strategist or lawyer—
He doesn't demand that you follow the proper channels to issue your complaint.
He's not distant. He's not elusive.
And He has no need or desire to pull a fast one by you.
Our Lord has nothing to hide.

Too many philosophers and scientists and theologians have made God out to be a magician,
with cards up His sleeve and smoke covering the trap door.

It's even become a cliché to ask: "What's the meaning of life?"

God's will and plan, His desire and purpose aren't some big secret.
He doesn't sit back and keep us guessing, only to show us how dumb we are.
Our Lord makes His will abundantly clear in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Our Lord desires love. So the last verse of today's Gospel:
"These things I command you, so that you will love one another" (Jn 15:17).

And with love, joy isn't far behind. Towards the beginning of today's Gospel:
**"These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you,
and that your joy may be full"** (15:11).

Our Lord has nothing to hide.
The meaning of life is simple:
He desires love. And with love, joy.

But where is He to find this love?
Is it among us?
And what kind of love would He find?

Unfortunately, I think He'd find plenty of love, but rarely a self-giving love.
We tend to love ourselves.
We love when it's convenient. We love when it's easy.
And most of all, we love when we know someone's watching.
We love ourselves, and so our love is self-seeking.
It's defensive. It's protective. It's a love that won't let us be hurt or harmed or humiliated.

Our love hides our real desires and passions.
Our love deceives others by saying things we don't really mean.
Our love gives us control over others—
we love in our way, as we see fit, and only those whom we think deserve it.

Our love is calculated.
 It's quantified. It's measured. And it's limited.
 Sometimes we say, "I just ran out of love for her."
 Or, "I just can't bring myself to love him anymore."

This is our love—it's self-seeking, limited, weak, coercive, and ultimately not love at all.

And so we're crushed when hear in our Gospel for today,
"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (15:12),

It's impossible!
 We've broken this commandment; shattered it!
 We've failed miserably.
 We have not loved as He loved us, and we haven't even come close.

Repent.

But thanks be to God that our Lord's love is entirely different.
 The love of God is seen most clearly in the cross of Christ:
"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down His life for His friends"
 (15:13).

The love of God is self-giving.
 It's neither convenient nor easy.

The love of God is dangerous.
 It puts up no walls of defense.
 It allows harm to come and evil to attack.
 It suffers humiliation and pain and even death.

The love of God in Christ isn't guarded.
 It isn't calculated.
 And it can't be measured or limited.

God's love is so self-giving that He gives up control—He gives up power.
 He doesn't force you into submission or coerce you with pressure.
 His love puts Him right at the bottom, and you at the top.
 And His love isn't always received.
 This sort of love can be rejected, and often is.
 But that's what makes it love, and not force.

In the cross of Christ, the crucifixion and death of the Son of God, God refuses to have slaves.

If He wanted to control us, to run things by way of His power, then there's no need for the cross.
 But you aren't slaves. You aren't simply objects of His control.
 You are *free*.

And best of all, you are *friends*:

“You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you (15:14-15).

Friends are free.

They’re not paid to hang out.

And there are no handcuffs or threats with friends.

And so you are free.

You’re free with God.

He doesn’t bribe you or try to sell Himself to you.

The doors of His kingdom aren’t locked—

you’re free to leave any time.

But why would you?

Why would you want to go back to your sort of love, when here you’re surrounded with *His* love?

His love is the self-giving love.

We see God’s love for us most clearly when our eyes behold His Son on the cross for us.

That’s the greatest sort of love.

But that’s not the end of His love.

Oh no, He doesn’t just hang up His Son on the cross for you to see His love.

It’s not just a picture, not just a memory.

No, the love shown on the cross continues today.

Today our Lord still gives Himself for you.

His love is always self-sacrificial, always self-giving.

And the place where gives Himself to you is right here, right now.

He gives His Son to you in the word of forgiveness.

In the absolution, in the blessing, in the peace, in the bread, in the wine, in the benediction—

all gifts of His Son for you.

This is the place of God’s love.

This is where He gives Himself to you, freely, with no force or coercion or bribery.

You’re always free to go—but don’t;

“Abide in My love” (15:9).

Stay here, stay in the Church—for this is the place where His gifts are given out.

And whenever you get the chance, whenever you know that our Lord will be giving Himself for you, come!

Gather yourselves around this Christ, around this self-sacrificial love; and abide in it!

Eat and drink of His body and blood as often as you can!

Run to the voice of the Gospel!
 Delight in hearing that your sins are forgiven and that you are free!

You are not slaves.
 You don't have to be here.
 But do stay.

For you are friends.
 You're friends with the most High God, the creator of the universe.
 Not because you chose Him, or happened to be born in a Christian family:

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide” (15:16).

And that fruit, as we mentioned last week, is faith, which can't help but show forth in love.

So when you get bogged down with your sort of love,
 when you get sick of your self-seeking, always counting, never-enough-sort of love,
 then repent—
 and ask our dear Father in heaven for *His* love.

And know that our dear Father in heaven is never stingy with His love.
 He never holds His Son back.
 With Him it's always Christ for you, no matter what—
 no matter how bad, or how often, or how undeserving—
 it's always Christ for you.

For you are friends. And as friends there is love. And with love there is joy.

May His joy be in you, and may your joy be full, so that you will love one another.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit