

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (YEAR B) Sunday 5 May 2024

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

TEAMS

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Introducing the Gospel

The Christian community (John 15:9-17)

The Easter season, spanning the period from Easter Sunday until Pentecost, celebrates life with the risen Christ. On the Thursday between the Sixth and Seventh Sunday of Easter the Church celebrates the Feast of the Ascension. Today's Gospel reading prepares for the Ascension by revisiting core teaching that Jesus gave to his disciples in the farewell discourse at the Last Supper as narrated by John. When Jesus is preparing his disciples for their ongoing life in the world after he has been taken from them, he makes two important points. He calls them his friends and he gives them the commandment to love one another as he has loved them. The group of people whom Jesus leaves behind are to be united as a team bound together in mutual love.

Our image to stimulate reflection on Jesus' new commandment for the future is *teams*.

Core extract from the Gospel passage (John 15.12-15; for reflection throughout the week)

'This is my commandment,
that you love one another as I have loved you.
No one has greater love than this,
to lay down one's life for one's friends.
You are my friends if you do what I command you.
I do not call you servants any longer,
because the servant does not know what the master is doing;
but I have called you friends,
because I have made known to you
everything that I have heard from my Father.

Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)

Risen Lord Jesus,
you show true love to your people.
Send your Holy Spirit to inspire us,
that we may show true love to you
and to those with whom we live;
for you are our friend and companion,
now and always.
Amen.

READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

John 15.9-17

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

Dwelling with the text (John 15: 9-17)

Begin exploring this part of John's narrative of Jesus' farewell discourse with his disciples by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

Thinking and talking

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- What do you imagine the mood to be during Jesus' last meal with his disciples?
- What is Jesus referring to when he speaks of 'to lay down one's life for one's friends'?
- What is so important about Jesus calling his disciples his friends?
- What does Jesus mean when he says, 'This is my commandment to you'?
- What does this narrative say for us today?

Using your Bible

In John's Gospel, the context for Jesus' teaching at this last meal is set by Jesus' actions. Recall how things start out.

- John 13: 1-5, 13-15, 34-35

Recall too how this farewell discourse ends with Jesus' high priestly prayer.

- John 17: 25-26

Follow the theme of love further in the Johannine literature.

- 1 John 4: 16b-21

Explore some classic texts about the love of God in the Old Testament.

- Nehemiah 9: 16-17
- Isaiah 54: 9-10

Exploring online

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Widen your exploration of John's account of Jesus' new commandment that you should love one another by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Jesus' new commandment
- Love in the Bible
- The four loves

Drawing on experience

The image to stimulate reflection on Jesus' new commandment to his disciples is *teams*. Draw on your own experience of being part of a well-functioning team.

- Have you experienced being part of a team where all are pulling together?
- Have you experienced Jesus' kind of love at work in your church?
- What makes a good team work well together?

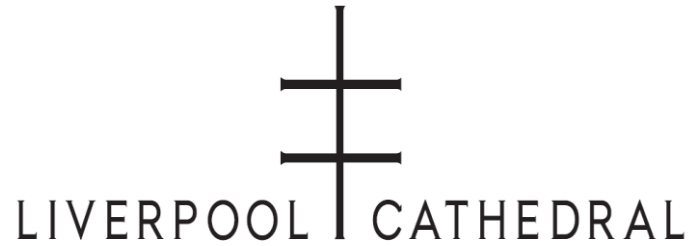
What have you learned about teams?

Creating and making

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by Jesus' new commandment that you should love one another or by the image of teams.

- Create a poster of ideas, Love is ...
- Create a collage illustrating teams.
- Make a display of images evocative of Jesus' new commandment.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of Jesus' new commandment or on the image of teams.

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EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

Our invitation then is for you to share your reflections, prayers and photos of your creative work with the Cathedral by emailing them to smc.lesliefrancis@gmail.com.

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales and the St Christopher's College Trust.



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