

“I will not leave you orphaned.”

6th Sunday of Easter [A] Acts 8:5-8, 14-17; 1 Peter 3:15-18; John 14:15-21

Jesus said: “The one who has my commandments in his heart and keeps them is the one who loves me.” It’s how you live that lets you know that you live in love.

The following are excerpted remarks by Naval Adm. William H. McRaven, Ninth Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, at the University-wide Commencement at The University of Texas at Austin, May 17th:

“It’s been almost 37 years to the day that I graduated from the University of Texas (UT). I remember a lot of things about that day...

But of all the things I remember, I don’t have a clue who the commencement speaker was that evening and I certainly don’t remember anything they said. So...acknowledging that fact—if I can’t make this commencement speech memorable—I will at least try to make it short.

The University’s slogan is,
“What starts here changes the world.”

Tonight there are almost 8,000 students graduating from UT. That great paragon of analytical rigor, [Ask.Com](#), says that the average American will meet 10,000 people in their life time. That’s a lot of folks.

But, if every one of you changed the lives of just ten people—and each one of those folks changed the lives of another ten people—just ten—then in five generations—125 years—**the class of 2014** will have changed the lives of 800 million people.

800 million people—think of it—over twice the population of the United States. Go one more generation and you can change the entire population of the world—8 billion people.

If you think it’s hard to change the lives of ten people—change their lives forever, you’re wrong.

Our struggles in this world are similar and the lessons to overcome those struggles and to move forward—changing ourselves and the world around us—will apply equally to all.

We are all just moments away starting to change the world—for the better. It will not be easy. But we can try to affect the lives of 800 million people in the next century.

Find someone to help you through life. Respect everyone.

Know that life is not fair and that we will fail often, but if take we take some risks, step up when the times are toughest, face down the bullies, lift up the downtrodden and never, ever give up—if we do these things, then next generation and the generations that follow will live in a world far better than the one we have today and—what started here will indeed have changed the world—for the better.”

(END OF COMMENTS)

Being a disciple of Jesus marks us: not by the cross around our neck or our presence in these pews. We're marked with His love, which left unchecked and unhindered should permeate our lives and relationships...His fingerprint upon us.

Talk is cheap and words are without meaning unless they are expressed in deeds. Love is not simply a nice feeling, a sentiment, a warm emotion. **Affection** is a feeling. Love becomes real in decisions made and in the actions that follow. **It is in activity that love is realized.**

Words of love are of great importance. There's nothing wrong with saying "I love you." In fact they can be the most beautiful and powerful words in a person's life. It is vital for husbands to tell their wives they love them. It's vital for wives to tell their husbands they love them. It is very vital for children to hear words of love from their moms and dads, along with lots of hugs. And friends, too, should not be ashamed to let each other know that they care for and love one another.

Friendship has its demands. A friend has to be trustworthy, keep confidences, and care for the well-being and happiness of a friend. We are God's friends forever, and we try to please God always.

Jesus did not discount the value of the verbal communication of love but He went way beyond it because He knew that love is much more than mere words. In fact He knew of love's power to change the whole world, telling us even to love our enemies and that if we truly did, the world would be changed. Jesus went on to prove what He believed in the way He died for us, in the way He died to redeem our world by His love for all of God's children.

What a realist this Jesus is! We are the ones who tend to make love unrealistic. We make love into something soft, dreamy, and cheap. If you think we don't, then take a look at what television or Hollywood does with love. Jesus, on the other hand, defines love in terms that are strong, concrete and real. **Love is action; love is a way of living;** love is an attitude toward others that expresses why God created us in the first place. God created us to love us and in return be loved by us.

The Holy Spirit, who is Love personified, acts internally within each one of us. The Holy Spirit is present within our hearts and souls, animating and inspiring us. The Holy Spirit lives and moves deep within us, within our souls.

Love and the Holy Spirit are made present to us...both are the expression of God. God is made real for us, becomes present to us through love and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus not only told his disciples (and us) to love one another, but that this love would serve as a visible way to identify his disciples. He left all of us with a commandment to love that would leave us marked, that **should** leave us marked.

Marked by compassion for one another.

Marked by a spirit of forgiveness.

Marked by a desire to serve.

Our love for one another is an identifier that marks us as His.

Love is at the heart of John's gospel – written, the text tells us, by the “beloved disciple.” And it is a recurring refrain in this particular passage. The word “love” appears no less than five times in this brief paragraph. But it is that singular promise – “I will not leave you orphans” – that carries the greatest resonance, and reveals the kind of love Jesus is talking about.

It is love that looks after those who feel as small and defenseless as children...those who are worried, or frightened. It is love that teaches, encourages, comforts.

It is love that helps to make all of us who are children of God aware of wonder. And is a love that reassures us, no matter what, that there is someone there, in good times and in bad (**same as a wedding**).

So, keep family and friends close, respect everyone and hold tight to your faith. The Spirit will guide you.

You young people are more apt to make changes now than I am...you are the future of our church...you still have a long life ahead of you. Get out there and make a difference. Be a part of changing the lives of 800 million+ people of the future!

We are not alone. We are not orphans. We are children of a loving God.

Deacon Greg Cecere

May 25, 2014

(with excerpts from Fr. Chares Irwin)