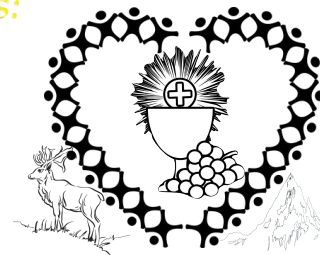


*Our Current Weekend Mass Schedule for the Elk Valley is:
Fernie on Saturday evening at 5pm,
Sparwood at 9am Sunday morning,
and Elkford at 4pm Sunday afternoon.*



The Sunday Mass is broadcast via Zoom from Fernie & Sparwood (see below).

1st/2nd May – Fifth Sunday of Easter

Dear All,

Greetings at a wonderful time of year. Or at least, as soon as I get my truck back from the garage where it is having some major work done to it, it will be a wonderful time of year because it will be ‘camping time’!!!

I will make this e-mail reasonably short, because I will attach to it a longer piece I have written about a bit of John’s gospel we don’t often look at; that is, the section after Jesus tells us to abide in him and then tells us to live by love. In this third section he talks about ‘hate’. As this is not an easy topic, and probably not one that I would deal with particularly well in a sermon, I thought I would look at it here as I am sure that many people experience some sort of rejection or hatred, and some might struggle within themselves with these feelings. **Spoiler alert:** the answer is to abide in God’s love!

Chatting at Mass?

It was good to see that there was a bit more activity in the ‘chat’ function during Masses last weekend. One person did have a prayer request that thankfully I did see. It involved (I think) their son and his dog; so I did pray for this. But I would ask that if you do have a prayer request that you don’t want everyone to see, then please send it privately to ‘1A - Chat’ and they will note it down for me as normally I can’t see the chat that goes on during Mass (unless I put my glasses on and stare at the small screen on the other side of the altar). And normally at the end of Mass the chat is gone! (With the iPad I don’t know how to save the chat.) And I would so hate to miss someone’s prayer request. But do feel free to share things on chat.



From the CWL –

St. Joseph the Carpenter

Last week I gave full details of a competition for CWL members to make something out of wood to mark the year of St. Joseph, who was, of course, a carpenter. If you didn’t see it, please look at last week’s e-mail or look it up via the parish website.

But just so you know, my personal woodwork project is coming on very well. No piece of art, but a wooden panel to take my new battery monitor in my camper.



Okay, a bit of vanish will make it look nicer, and a little smoothing

of the edges will also help, but we are getting there. I am not one hundred percent certain that this is actually where I want the monitor, so I won't do the finishing touches until I am sure. *(And I did get a lot of help with this project: from someone who cut the original bit of wood for me and someone else who cut the whole in it, but I did the measuring, and isn't that the important bit?)*

And Finally...

Once again I am running to finish this on time, and the sun is shining and Thumper want to play football (soccer), or indeed, any game that involves catching, chasing or fetch. So I must rush.

Fr. David @ Thumper



Abide, Love and Hate!?!

As I mentioned at the start of my sermon last week, one of the challenges with John's gospel is to determine where one section starts and another ends. This weekend we are going to be reading John 15:1-8, and next weekend 15:9-17. While other divisions can be made, many would see these passages as the first two of three sections in this part of John's gospel:

- i. **To abide in Jesus** (15:1-11). The need to abide in Jesus so as to bear much fruit. A union of love flows from the Father and Jesus to the disciples.
- ii. **The commandment to love** (15:12-17). The new situation of the disciples, which results from what Jesus has done for them, and they see the imperative to love one another as he has loved them.
- iii. **To be hated by the world** (15:18–16:3). If we are models of Christ, then what the world hated about Christ it will hate about us in the same way.

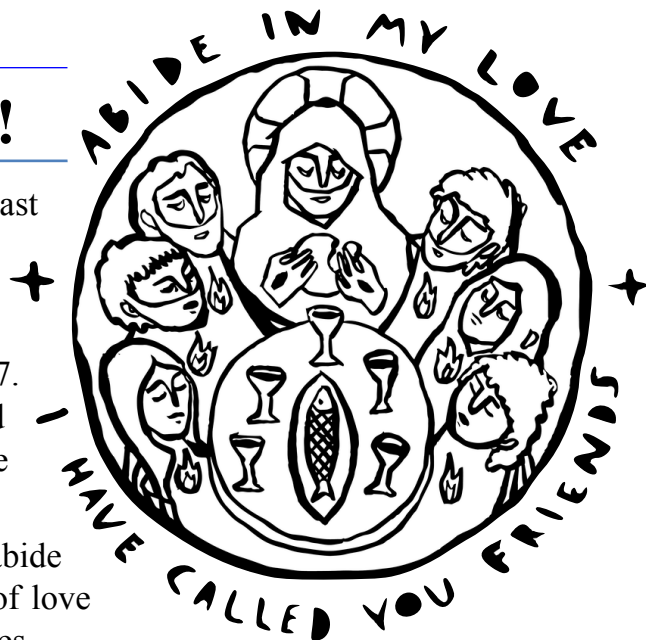
While our readings at Mass do not exactly match up with this division, we can see that verses 9 to 11 could be in either section as they cover both abiding and love:

*“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.”* (John 15:9-11)

Hopefully in my sermon at Mass I will cover 'abiding' this week and 'loving' next week, but the issue of 'hate' is not often touched on, so I thought I would share just a couple of ideas about this.

The issue here is that the whole of the last supper discourse is leading up to Jesus' arrest, torture and death; if Jesus didn't touch on his rejection – *the hatred that others have for him* – then the reader of the gospel would rightly question why this person of unconditional love was hated and why the first readers of the gospel often had to hide themselves under fear of persecution for believing in Jesus.

The start point is Jesus saying, *“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.”* (15:18). To early Christians this would say that Christ knew that rejection would come both for him and his followers so don't be surprised when this happens to you. While there is still persecution of Christians in some parts of our world, and while today Christianity is being embraced less and less in our western society, really none of us who will read this know this type of persecution, so instead here I will focus more generally on the idea of hate and how to deal with hatred and similar negative feelings, both in others and in ourselves.



Jesus goes on and tells us about the culpability of those who hate him,

“If I had not come and spoken to them they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin.” (John 15:22)

I think the writer John is still expecting his reader to remember back in chapter nine when the man born blind was healed, and how his eyes were opened, he saw and he worshiped Jesus, but the leaders of the church who said that they could see failed to recognise who Jesus was. And precisely because they have said that they are not blind they are condemned by Jesus.

Jesus said,

“I came into this world for judgement so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.”

Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him,

“Surely we are not blind, are we?”

Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would not have sin.

But now that you say, ‘We see’, your sin remains.” (John 9:39-41)

We come across conflict, evil, hatred or any of those negative attributes in both Christians and others. But when it is a Christian who is being hostile or nasty, I do wonder if they really know Jesus, or more precisely, really know the love Jesus has for them? And this is true if the person is someone out there or if the person is myself! We too can be kind and loving, but in certain areas of our lives also harbour hate, so we have to question whether there are areas of our lives where the love of God has not permeated.



I do wonder how many people (Catholics and non-Catholics) were brought up to know the historical figure of Jesus and even his ministry of doing good, but they were never told of his unconditional love for them? How many people do not see ‘the Church’ and ‘love’ as two things that go together? How many see the Church as an institution that simply produces an ever increasing list of “thou shalt not...”

commands, rather than a community charged with passing on Jesus’ love for every person? And if this is the case and they have never been told the message, how can they (or we) be held fully accountable for failing to live by that love?

I used to know two sisters, two lovely ladies, who were very good and kind. But if one gave the other a present, then almost before you could count to ten, the other would have given another present in return, which just happened to be of about the same monetary value. And I wondered about this: do they not want to be in the other one’s debt? Or do they think that this is what is expected of them? Both of these might be true, but there might be another underlying explanation. My fear is that this is rather a result of not knowing what it is like to be truly loved!



“I am
the
vine,
you are
the
branches.
Those
who
abide
in me
and I in
them
bear
much
fruit.”

The first step to loving is to accept love; and how many people struggle to accept love from others? Our parents loved us before we loved them, and this is where we learnt the nature of love. God loved us first, and it is by abiding in this love that we can love others.

If you struggle to accept love then of course, if someone gives you something you feel honour bound to give back at the same level. But with God there is no way we could possibly give back even the smallest fraction of the love he has given to us, and that realisation might be uncomfortable until we understand love. Similarly, how could I possibly pay back my Mum for bearing me in the womb? How could I possibly pay back my parents for choosing to love me even while I was a horrid teenager? How can I pay back the Church for ordaining me? We can't; that is the nature of love, we can't pay it back and somehow clear ourselves of that debt precisely because there is no debt in true love, it is given freely and without any expectation of return. And that is how Christ has loved us and how we are invited to live our lives.

So if good and kind people can be blind to the love that others have for them, then how much more blind are those who show the 'negative attributes' I previously mentioned? And if they

are blind and have never known how really to deal with this 'love' thing, then surely they are not to be condemned but rather liberated, not put down but rather to be given sight! What they need is to truly experience unconditional love. And isn't this precisely what Christ came to do, and what we are called to continue, isn't this the whole point of the Church?

In this section of John's gospel Jesus goes on to say that when the 'Advocate' [the Holy Spirit] comes, the Advocate "*will bear witness to me*" (v.26). He then adds that "*you also are witnesses*" (v.27). By saying this, I think Jesus is telling us that in the same way that He witnessed to the Father's love in the world, so we must witness to Christ's love, and we have the Holy Spirit as our helper and guide with this task. Indeed, without the power of the Holy Spirit, humanly speaking it would be an impossible task, but with the Holy Spirit, all is possible for God. We are the ones called to take on Christ's ministry of bringing light and love into our world.

And let's not be naïve about it, often when we try to love others we will be hated! That is exactly what happened to Jesus. People are more comfortable in darkness.

Jesus said, “This is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.”
(John 3:19)

But at the start of John’s gospel we heard that the light, Jesus, shines in the darkness, and the darkness can not overcome it (cf. John 1:5). So as we go out with the light we might be met by ‘negative attributes’, but because through the power of the Holy Spirit we abide in Christ, our light is brighter than their darkness; our love is stronger than their hatred. Thus the necessity for us to truly understand what it means to abide in Christ’s love and be comfortable with that love. Until others have experience the joy and fulfilment of self-giving love, how can we expect anyone to want to move into the light?

I say all this because I know that a number of people struggle with either a personal rejection by others, or rejection by others of the joy they have in their faith, and this can be very hurtful. Still others, perhaps secretly many of us, might struggle with negative feelings within ourselves, areas inside of ourselves that do not feel like they are bathed in God’s love, areas inside ourselves where we can experience darkness. But the answer to all of this is to go more deeply into Jesus’ love for each of us; we have to see that we are loved by Jesus – *both in the areas of our lives where there is light and in the areas that are darkness* – and there is no way that we can possibly repay Christ for that. Our calling is not just to be good and kind, but to burrow down so deeply into God’s love that it is not something we have to explain, rather it will just flow out of us! We have to know and believe that

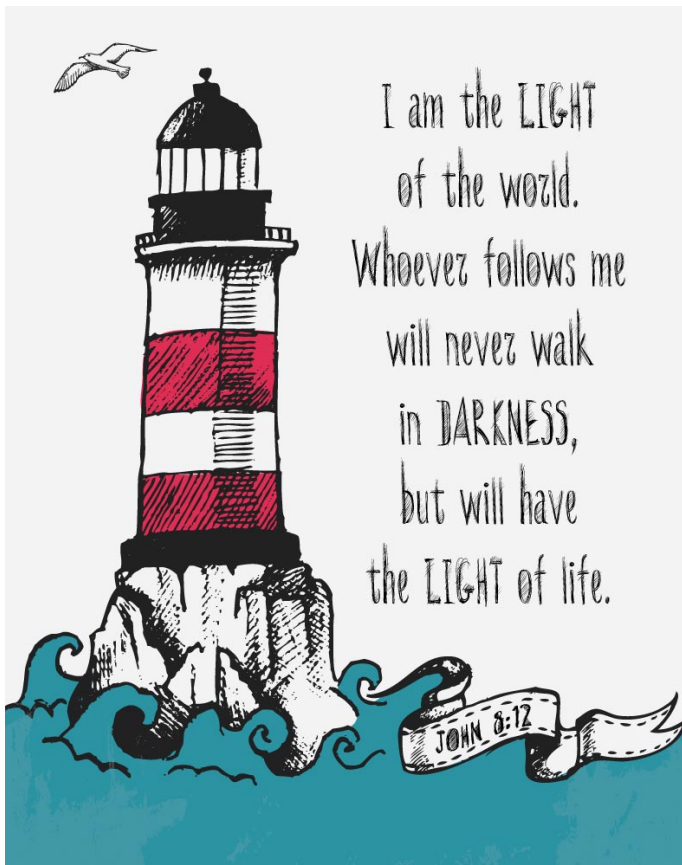
we are loved, that we abide in that love, and that love is more important than anything else in this world.

Speaking personally, I know that I am not there yet, but the tremendous love that the parish gives me helps me to ‘burrow down’ into the meaning of unconditional love. So I thank everyone for that.

And I so much pray that the thing that will mark us out as a parish, as a Church, or as a group like the CWL within the Church, will be the power of our love. I pray that our love will not have to be explained because, like a bright light, it will just fill every corner of every place that we enter.

With prayers,

Fr. David.
May 2021



John 15:1-16:3

To Abide in Jesus

Jesus said to his disciples, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. 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.

The Commandment to Love

“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.

To be Hated by the World

‘If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, “Servants are not greater than their master.” If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my Father also. If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not have sin. But now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. It was to fulfil the word that is written in their law, “They hated me without a cause.”

‘When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

‘I have said these things to you to keep you from stumbling. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God. And they will do this because they have not known the Father or me.

Zoom Links

Link to Weekend Masses

To get the link to our two weekend Masses please send an e-mail to one of our parish offices with your name and you will then receive the link each week.

info@holyfamilyfernie.ca

ElkValleyRC@gmail.com

Waiting Room:

Please note when you log on you will be put in a “waiting room”.

Hopefully as soon as we see you waiting we will let you in.

*If there is a bit of a delay, please just wait;
the co-host or myself will be with you as quickly as we can.*