



Holy Thursday is a day of deep reflection for Christians, as it commemorates Jesus’ Last Supper with His disciples, the washing of the feet, and the moment when Christ instituted the Eucharist. However, one of the most moving and transformative aspects of this day is the new commandment that Jesus gave to His apostles: **“Love one another as I have loved you”** (John 13:34). This commandment not only encapsulates the essence of Jesus’ message but also challenges us to live a life of sacrificial love, humility, and service. In this article, we will explore the meaning of this commandment, its relevance in our daily lives, and how we can apply it in a world that desperately needs authentic love.

The Context of the Commandment: The Last Supper

The commandment of love was given by Jesus during the Last Supper, an intimate and deeply significant moment. Jesus knew that His hour was near and that He would soon be betrayed, arrested, and crucified. In this context, He chose to share with His disciples a message that would be the core of His teaching: love. This was not a superficial or conditional love, but a love that reflected His own—a love that gives itself to the extreme.

Jesus did not just speak about love; He demonstrated it through actions. Before giving this commandment, He washed His disciples’ feet, an act of humility and service that shattered all expectations of the time. Through this gesture, Jesus showed that true love is not about power or greatness but about serving others with a generous heart.

The Love of Jesus: A Model to Follow

When Jesus says, “as I have loved you,” He is inviting us to look at His life as the perfect example of love. Jesus’ love was:

1. **Unconditional:** Jesus loved everyone, even those who betrayed, denied, or crucified Him. His love did not depend on the actions of others but on His divine nature.
2. **Sacrificial:** Jesus gave His life for us. His love was not just in words but in concrete actions that culminated in the ultimate sacrifice on the cross.
3. **Humble:** Jesus, being God, became a servant. He washed His disciples’ feet, showing that true love does not seek to be served but to serve.
4. **Forgiving:** From the cross, Jesus forgave His executioners. His love holds no grudges but seeks reconciliation and healing.



This is the kind of love we are called to imitate. It is not an easy or comfortable love but one that demands self-giving, sacrifice, and humility.

The New Commandment: Why is it “New”?

Jesus calls this commandment “new,” but why? The Old Testament already spoke of loving one’s neighbor (Leviticus 19:18). The newness lies in the measure and model of this love: **“as I have loved you.”** Christian love is not limited to loving those who love us or those with whom we feel comfortable. It is a love that transcends human barriers and extends even to enemies (Matthew 5:44).

This love is new because it is founded on the grace and truth of Christ. It is not merely a feeling but a conscious decision to imitate Jesus in how we relate to others.

Love as the Mark of Christ’s Disciples

Jesus said: **“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another”** (John 13:35). Love is not just a recommendation; it is the defining characteristic of Christ’s followers. In a world marked by division, selfishness, and indifference, Christian love must be a light that shines in the darkness.

This love is not only to be lived within the Christian community but must extend to everyone, especially the most vulnerable: the poor, the marginalized, the sick, and the suffering. As Saint John reminds us: **“Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar”** (1 John 4:20).

Challenges in Living the Commandment of Love

Living this commandment is not easy. In our daily lives, we face situations that test our ability to love:

- **Selfishness:** We often put our own needs above those of others.
- **Resentment:** Holding grudges prevents us from loving as Christ loves us.



- **Indifference:** In a fast-paced world, it is easy to overlook the needs of those around us.
- **The throwaway culture:** We live in a society that values people for what they have or produce, not for who they are.

To overcome these challenges, we need God’s grace. Christian love is not something we can achieve on our own; it is a gift we receive from God and must ask for in prayer.

How to Live the Commandment of Love in Practice

1. **Serve others:** Following Jesus’ example, we can look for opportunities to serve others, especially the most vulnerable. This can be through volunteering, charity, or simply being present for those who need us.
 2. **Forgive:** Forgiveness is a powerful expression of Christian love. Forgiving does not mean forgetting or justifying evil but freeing ourselves from resentment and opening the door to reconciliation.
 3. **Love your enemies:** This is perhaps the most difficult aspect of Jesus’ commandment. Loving those who have hurt us requires special grace, but it is possible with God’s help.
 4. **Live in community:** Christian love is lived in community. Actively participating in the life of the Church, supporting our brothers and sisters in faith, and building authentic relationships are concrete ways to live this commandment.
 5. **Reflect on Christ’s love:** Meditating on Jesus’ Passion helps us understand the depth of His love and inspires us to love as He did.
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The Impact of Christian Love in the World

The commandment of love is not just a spiritual ideal; it has the power to transform the world. When we live this love, we become instruments of peace, justice, and reconciliation. Christian love can heal wounds, build bridges, and bring hope to a broken world.

In a world marked by violence, inequality, and loneliness, Christ’s love is more necessary than ever. As Saint Teresa of Calcutta said: **“Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love.”**



Conclusion: A Call to Love Like Christ

Jesus’ commandment on Holy Thursday, **“Love one another as I have loved you,”** is a radical call to live a life of authentic love. This love is not a fleeting feeling but a daily decision to imitate Christ in how we relate to others.

This Holy Thursday, let us ask God for the grace to love as He loves us. May our love be a reflection of His mercy, a testimony of His presence in the world, and a light that guides others to Him. As Saint Paul reminds us: **“And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love”** (1 Corinthians 13:13).

May this commandment of love be the center of our lives and the force that drives us to be true disciples of Christ.