



**Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2026**

***Victory in Europe Day (VE Day)***

**Gospel Reading**

**John 15:12-17**

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.

**Other Readings: Acts 15:22-31      Psalm 57.8-end**

**Homily**

**Victory in Europe Day (VE Day)**

Victory in Europe Day commemorates the end of six years of brutal war, causing millions of deaths and widespread suffering in Europe and beyond. Celebrations went on well into the night on 8 May 1945. King George VI gave a radio address praising his subjects for their endurance, calling for lasting peace, and asking all to remember those who would not return. As then 'Head' of The Church of England, one imagines this passage from John's Gospel could have been very much in the King's mind - the message of our need to love one another sufficient that we lay down our life for friends.

As we are all too aware, given the turbulent times in which we live, two world wars have not prevented further aggressions and conflicts. Viewing all human life as precious, recognising our similarities as more important than our differences, sharing love, remains, for some, too difficult a life-stance to adopt. For Christians, our approach to life in relationship to God and to others could not be clearer: we should love the Lord our God, and love our neighbours as ourselves. If disciplined in following God's commandments, we seek a life in which we 'do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God' (Micah 6:8); love, compassion, and humility will be our watchwords.

How do we follow the commandment to love one another as God loves us. How might we best identify ourselves to others as followers of the Way of Christ? Adopting the following characteristics will make us recognisable as Christians.

*The first key characteristic is Grace - defined as unmerited favour.* In the working out of our lives, showing grace to those with whom we live and work and share our lives – near and far – is about treating others as we would like to be treated. Acting with grace may mean adopting a spirit of forgiveness such that people can move on from relational challenges into a new way living together, abiding, in love and trust. Who, in the mid-1940s could have foreseen the strength of the relationship between Germany and the European allies some 80 years later – founded through grace.

With God's help we are to be gracious to one another, blessing those who have offended us, keeping short accounts when it comes to resentments, living in the way we daily pray, 'Lord, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.'

*A second characteristic is Generosity.* Individuals, and indeed countries once at war, can work together to rebuild for the betterment of all with a spirit of generosity, which allows for mutual growth, where no one person or ideology overshadows and oppresses. Imagine a generosity of heart that prevents us from being suspicious of the outsider, of the stranger, of the one who is different, and instead promotes a sharing of resources, an inquisitiveness and curiosity to learn more about each other, to build bridges of love rather than create chasms of hate. Jesus said, "Freely you have received, freely give". God calls us to be generous with ourselves, our money, time and resources. A generous life shapes stronger relationships that foster peace.

*A third characteristic is having a Community Spirit,* a commitment to maintaining good relationships and building an environment safe for everyone, in which all can flourish and thrive. This requires that we embrace a spirit of service, recognising the needs of the other outweigh one's own. We clearly have this wisdom in our kit-bag so to speak, and have applied it successfully in the past. From the ashes of World War Two, to enable co-operation and dialogue between nations, a number of organisations were created, chief amongst them, The United Nations or UN, and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation better known as NATO. A collaborative will, understanding, cooperation, all these things are central to who we are as Christians. St Paul told us to encourage one another, to build each other up – that is part of working with a community spirit. Whilst some view faith as personal, only ever to be practiced privately, the New Testament shows that following Jesus is about building community, the Body of Christ, 24/7, at home, work, socially. Christians modelling this in the small scale locally can have an impact on the bigger picture nationally, and even globally.

*A final characteristic, (final only for the purposes of this homily), is Compassion* which was markedly apparent in post war Britain in the creation of the Welfare State and the National Health Service; their purpose - to cope with widespread deprivation, disease and poverty. Food poverty was an issue in Britain, well into the 1960s when children had free school milk and other food supplements on prescription. Compassion for those in need is an echo of Matthew 25: 36-40, "I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' "

Jesus constituted His body, the church, not just to focus on the needs of those within it; rather, it was a message to share God's love with everyone - widows, orphans, prisoners, the sick, the poor and needy. As his disciples, we're called to hone these characteristics, to apply these principles in our own lives, bringing peace, healing and wholeness to a hurting world. That is our mission. Jesus calls us to love one another by being gracious, generous, community minded and compassionate; and by this shall people know that we are his disciples. Amen

### **Conversation Questions**

1. Which characteristic do you find most personally challenging and where might you find help to demonstrate this facet of loving one another?
2. In the reading from Acts (15.22-31), how does the church at Jerusalem demonstrate God's love to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia?

3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you?  
What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

### **Prayer**

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you. You may wish to use five smooth stones to guide your prayers.

### **Let us pray**

God of heaven and earth, help us to live in this world, faithfully guided by your love which manifests itself in our love towards one another. Prepare us for that great “getting up morning” when your new world is fully revealed.

### **Amen**

*Source: Common Prayer (A liturgy for ordinary radicals) Shane Clairboure et.al.*

### **Collect of the day**

*Almighty God,  
Who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ  
Have overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life:  
Grant that, as by your grace going before us you put into our minds good desires,  
So by your continual help  
We may bring them to good effect;  
Through Jesus Christ our risen Lord,  
Who is alive and reigns with you,  
In the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
One God, now and for ever.  
Amen.*

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