

## Easter V

Our world and our nation have gone through a difficult year and a half. A pandemic that killed a million or so folks throughout the world. Many folks in our country and throughout the world have lost jobs and many have had their family food supplies lessened and their home accommodations threatened. We have also had a country that is divided politically and economically. And then we hear these words from John in this week's Epistle, "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is born of God."

There are times when words like those found in John's Epistle are just that, words! Love is a gift from God. It is not earned; it is a grace-filled gift offered to every one of us in the hopes that we will receive and live into it every moment of our lives. The neat and beautiful thing is we often do so. We also know that there are times in our lives when that gift seems elusive for any number of reasons; perhaps because of self-interest or fear or anxiety, and yes, even prejudice, whether it be religious, racial, whatever. The difficult thing for many to accept is that, even with those nefarious actions, God's love continues to nudge at us, calling us to look at what we are doing and what it costs to ourselves but others as well, reminding us that we are God's beloved and God will have us in God's eternal embrace.

One of my favorite theologians is the existentialist Paul Tillich. In his book, *The Courage to Be*, he used the phrase in terms of our relationship with God, "the acceptance of acceptance." The notion that despite our failures we are accepted by God as God's beloved. How can that be; surely some price has to be paid, and it was, by a young Jewish man named Jesus.

We are called to act responsibly in every moment of our lives. Another of my favorite passages in Scripture dealing with this issue is offered by the prophet Micah when he wrote, "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God".

To do justice. We are called to act responsibly in our relationships. That includes realizing that every single person has an obligation to seek what is good,

appropriate and of value for the person before us at any given moment. Sometimes that may entail calling ourselves to account or indeed the person with whom we are interacting, but it is done with the perspective of raising up ourselves or our neighbor to a life of value and love.

Love mercy. Mercifulness is expressed in numerous ways. Perhaps it is shown when we attempt to share in the grief with another in hopes of assuaging some of the pain associated with that grief. Perhaps it is assisting a person in economic times by assisting them financially even if it is just to pay for a day or two of a family's food cost. Or it may be having the will, the courage, the faith, the love to ask forgiveness for our offence or to have the grace and fortitude to offer forgiveness to one who seeks forgiveness from us for their action.

And finally, to walk humbly with your God. One of the ways we do that is to acknowledge that no matter how much we try or pretend we know God's will for us at any given moment, we walk in faith. We hope and pray that our ideas, our thoughts and our actions are representative of God's call upon our lives. Yet the reality is throughout history religious traditions and people of faith who are purportedly believers and responding to their traditions can teach and follow those things that tend to deny or denigrate the value of another's faith understanding as though their tradition has it all together. We are called to prayer, we are called to understanding, we are called to compassion because as John has informed us in his Epistle, "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is born of God." May it be so in our lives.

Amen