“If you love me... you will keep my commandments (Jn 14:15).” What started as a statement of departng Jesus whose memory is to be kept alive, now becomes a challenge for us as we celebrate the season of Easter.

To be truly obedient. But looking closely at the context of the text, the commandment, that is also expounded in John 15 is: “Love one another as I have loved you.” So obeying this commandment is also affirming the urgency to love.

Our Readings this Sunday actually make us ask, “How loving are we? What are the concrete actions that make us manifest our love for others?”

Philip, our First Reading shows, bravely trod the unexplored path in Samaria, a Jewish settlement that never earned a sympathy from the conservative Jews, and opened his heart to the Samaritans. Sheer courage for Philip who with his openness to the needy had shown the signs many were amazed at: evil spirits were exorcised, paralytics and cripples healed! And with great joy the Samaritans accepted him and they were baptized.

The Second Reading offers more concrete ways to love aside from showing good example: explaining to those who ask the reasons for our hope (1Pt 3:15), keeping one’s conscience clear by doing things with gentleness and reverence even when one is maligned or defamed (1 Pet 16), suffering for doing good than doing evil, and loving until it hurts.

But even with the hurting, love must be felt beyond physical reality. This is what Jesus had shown when he had to leave the ones he already had called, “my friends, in a very painful way, dying on the cross,” dying for them. He said, “I will not leave you orphans. I will come to you (Jn 14:18). His love is so great that he assures us of his continued presence—a promise that forever sparks hope in our hearts. The gospel finally reveals to us that it is the love that binds all of us together—the Father, Jesus and us. This is further affirmed by the presence of the Holy Spirit. When the apostles heard of Philip’s effective ministry, they too affirmed his apostolate, praying over them that they would receive the Holy spirit.

Suffering for the sake of good can also lead us to life in the spirit as Jesus, when put to death, resurrected as promised in the gospel. Furthermore, Jesus promised to send the Spirit of truth, the advocate to dwell in our hearts (Jn 14:20-21). It is a deep mysterious reality that Easter has gifted us.

I remember I was asked by a student how “fear of the Lord” should be explained simply to young people. I asked them, “Were there moments in your decision-making when you said to yourselves, ‘I am afraid to offend my parents because they love me so much; I don’t want to fail them?’ So you obey them. Those are moments when the spirit of your parents’ love is alive in your sensibilities that it continues to form you in your decision-making. That is also true with the Holy Spirit in our lives. The love of Jesus becomes real in our hearts and we cannot but obey his commandments. In fact the readings tell us in another take: we love Jesus so much that we swear to love, too. And when this happens, we become wise as we become more attuned to life that always seeks the good of others, the Jesus Way.

— Bro. Hansel Mapayo, SSP

Mutual Respect among Various Faiths
Fr. James H. Kroeger, MM

The Catholic Church sought to promote a new vision of human relationships at the Second Vatican Council; we read in its documents: “Upon the Muslims too, the Church looks with esteem” (Nostra Aetate [NA] 3). Yes, “the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place among these are the Muslims, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge humanity” (Lumen Gentium 16).

The Council notes that the Muslims “adore one God, living and enduring, merciful and all-powerful, Maker of heaven and earth and Speaker to all. They strive to submit whole-heartedly even to His inscrutable decrees, just as did Abraham, whom whom the Islamic faith is pleased to associate itself” (NA 3).

Vatican II continues: “Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, his Virgin Mother; at times they call on her, too, with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment... Consequently, they prize the moral life, and give worship to God especially through prayer, almsgiving, and fasting” (NA 3). Indeed, this is the clear “dialogical” teaching of Vatican II!
THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon
(Cf. Is 48:20)
(Recited when there is no opening song.)

Proclaim a joyful sound and let it be heard; proclaim to the ends of the earth: The Lord has freed his people, alleluia.

Greeting
(The sign of the cross is made here.)

P — The grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
All — And with your spirit.

Introduction
(These [or similar words] may be used to address the assembly)

P — When Jesus is with the disciples, he is their friend and defender. But after his death and Resurrection, Jesus will return to the father. At the Last Supper, he tells the disciples not to be sad because he will not leave them orphaned. He will send them the Holy Spirit who will act in his name. At this Eucharistic celebration, the Holy Spirit is with us. Let us open our hearts to his inspiration.

Penitential Act

P — Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries. (Pause)

P — You were sent to heal the contrite of heart: Lord, have mercy.
All — Lord, have mercy.

P — You came to call sinners: Christ, have mercy.
All — Christ, have mercy.

P — You are seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us: Lord, have mercy.
All — Lord, have mercy.

P — May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.
All — Amen.

Gloria

All — Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father. Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect

P — Let us pray. (Pause)

Grant, almighty God, that we may celebrate with heartfelt devotion these days of joy, which we keep in honor of the risen Lord, and that what we relive in remembrance we may always hold to in what we do.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
All — Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading
(Acts 8:5–8, 14–17) (Sit)

The Samaritans' reception of the faith and the gift of the Holy Spirit means that salvation is offered to all peoples, regardless of race and creed.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

PHILIP went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Christ to them. With one accord, the crowds paid attention to what was said by Philip when they heard it and saw the signs he was doing. For unclean spirits, crying out in a loud voice, came out of many possessed people, and many paralyzed or crippled people were cured. There was great joy in that city.

Second Reading
(1 Pt 3:15–18)

Peter encourages the Christians who are misunderstood and persecuted because of their faith. Suffering with a clear conscience unites the believers with Christ who suffered for the sins of the unjust.
A reading from the first Letter of Saint Peter

BELOVED: Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that be the will of God, than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God. Put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the Spirit.

— The word of the Lord.
All — Thanks be to God.

Alleluia (Jn 14:23) (Stand)

All — Alleluia, alleluia. Whoever loves me will keep my word, says the Lord, and my Father will love him and we will come to him. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel (Jn 14:15–21)

P — A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.
All — Glory to you, O Lord.

JESUS said to his disciples: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows him. But you know him, because he remains with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me, because I live and you will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him.”

— The Gospel of the Lord.
All — Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily (Sit)

Profession of Faith (Stand)

All — I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, (At the words that follow, up to and including the Virgin Mary, all bow.)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Prayer of the Faithful

P — Let us now turn to our loving Father through the power of Holy Spirit and present to him our needs as well as those of the Church and of the world. Let us pray to him:

R — Lord, hear our prayer.

C — That the Holy Father Francis, bishops, priests, deacons, and lay leaders may know the power of the Holy Spirit so that they may be compassionate shepherds and defenders of God’s people, we pray: (R)

C — That those who carry the task of leadership and service in society and in government may be given the wisdom and strength to carry out their responsibilities, we pray: (R)

C — That Christians whose faith is weak and whose hope is tested may find strength in the Holy Spirit who is our consoler and defender, we pray: (R)

C — That, as temples of the Holy Spirit, we may learn to value ourselves and one another, shun corruption and sin, and give glory to our heavenly Father, we pray: (R)

C — May those who are sick and at the moment of death receive the comfort of the Lord, so that they may not fear but hold on to Christ who died to give life to all of us. We pray: (R)

C — Let us pray for the urgent concerns of our community and our personal intentions (pause). We pray: (R)

P — Lord, look with kindness on the petitions we bring before you. May your Holy Spirit make our hearts open to you.

This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.
All — Amen.

Presentation of the Gifts (Stand)

P — Pray, brethren...
All — May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Offerings

P — May our prayers rise up to you, O Lord, together with the sacrificial offerings, so that, purified by your graciousness, we may be conformed to the mysteries of your mighty love.

Through Christ our Lord.
All — Amen.

Preface V of Easter

P — The Lord be with you.
All — And with your spirit.
P — Lift up your hearts.
All — We lift them up to the Lord.
P — Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
All — It is right and just.
P — It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, at all times to acclaim you, O Lord, but in this time above all to laud you yet more gloriously, when Christ our Passover has been sacrificed.

By the oblation of his Body, he brought the sacrifices of old to fulfillment in the reality of the Cross and, by commending himself to you for our salvation, showed himself the Priest, the Altar, and the Lamb of sacrifice.

Therefore, overcome with paschal joy, every land, every people exults in your praise and even the heavenly Powers, with angelic hosts, sing together the unending hymn of your glory, as they acclaim:

All — Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. (Kneel)

Acclamation (Stand)

All — We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

**THE COMMUNION RITE**

**The Lord’s Prayer**

All — Our Father...
P — Deliver us, Lord...
All — For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and for ever.

Invitation to Peace

Invitation to Communion (Kneel)
P — Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

All — Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

**Communion Antiphon**

(Jn 14:15–16)

If you love me, keep my commandments, says the Lord, and I will ask the Father and he will send you another Paraclete, to abide with you for ever, alleluia.

Prayer after Communion (Stand)
P — Let us pray. (Pause)

Almighty ever-living God, who restore us to eternal life in the Resurrection of Christ, increase in us, we pray, the fruits of this paschal Sacrament and pour into our hearts the strength of his saving food.

Through Christ our Lord.

All — Amen.

**THE CONCLUDING RITES**

P — The Lord be with you.
All — And with your spirit.

Prayer over the People

P — Bow down for the blessing. (Pause)

Bestow increase of heavenly grace on your faithful, O Lord; may they praise you with their lips, with their souls, with their lives; and since it is by your gift that we exist, may our whole lives be yours.

Through Christ our Lord.
All — Amen.