



# Sunday Reflection

## Season of Easter

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew  
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 9 May 2021

# Easter 6

We gather here today to understand afresh God's love for each of us and for all people. At the beginning of this Christian Aid Week, we seek to be inspired anew by God's transforming vision for our world, made possible by God's love for us and our love for each other.

## Reflection for this week's Gospel

**"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." *John 15:12***

### An Illustration to set the scene

Our capacity to love comes from first being loved.

People in small village communities high in the Bolivian mountains have suffered a long history of abuse and neglect.

Centuries ago they were forced to work in silver mines by the Spanish; this last century, dumping of excess agricultural goods by the EU and the US destroyed their markets.

Poor and with little access to education, they lost self-respect and hope.

In a world of computers, fast cars and planes, they were cooking outside on open fires, collecting water from a river,

sleeping on the floor with few blankets against the fierce cold of nights.

Assisted by a small amount of funding from Christian Aid, Yolanda, a doctor, and Crisologo, her husband, an agriculturist, began working with these villagers.

Bolivians themselves, they could not believe the poverty in which they were living.

They talked to people to find out what they wanted.

Each village had a different priority – a health centre, a phone link, access to water.

Yet at each place the same thing began to happen – the children began to have their hair brushed, people began to smile.

Eventually, they had gained sufficient strength that when their river was polluted by effluent from a mine they themselves took the mining company to court and got compensation – sufficient to pay for water pumps outside their houses.

Lots of girl babies were given the name Yolanda.

## **Looking at the teaching of the Gospel**

In the passage immediately before today's Gospel, Jesus said, "I am the true vine".

"I am" sayings in John's Gospel are given at critical moments in Jesus' ministry to demonstrate who he is.

So we have today's passage in which Jesus gives his one command that sums up his entire ministry: "Love one another as I have loved you".

Jesus describes how, as he has been loved by the Father, so he loves us.

As we receive this love, so we are to love one another.

The gardener, the vine and the branches are all intimately connected.

As we keep this commandment to love, we will be "abiding", literally finding our dwelling, in Christ's love. From this everything else follows.

Centuries earlier, Isaiah had been proclaiming God's offer of steadfast love.

To those who will listen, God offers abundant, joyful and peaceful life. Who is this for, though?

In Isaiah this is part of a covenant relationship between God and the Israelites.

How stunning then is the story from Acts in which Peter accepts the invitation to enter the house of Cornelius, a Gentile.

In doing this he, a Jew, is breaking the rules.

Can you hear the bystanders catch their breath? Boundaries are breaking down.

In Cornelius' house the Holy Spirit comes on everyone.

Now all are included.

## **How can we reflect on the application to our lives?**

"Love one another as I have loved you" is such a simple command, yet so difficult.

We have to let go of our differences, our prejudices, our instinct to hold things tight to ourselves.

Following this command is possible when we take the second part of the command – "as I have loved you" – seriously.

When we know we are loved, we can let go of defending ourselves and are able to love others.

In Christian Aid Week, as individuals and as churches of different denominations, we act out love for people who see little evidence of others' having any love or care for them.

These may be people who sew clothes for our markets for wages that don't feed their family, who are defending their rainforest while we are buying goods that encourage its destruction, or who are living with the threat of rising waters as our governments take little action on climate change.

Dwelling in Jesus' love gives us the delight and courage to offer love to people like these.

Small communities in one part of Bolivia received love and that love spread until people smiled, and obtained justice for themselves.

The water that flowed from the newly installed pumps by their homes is deeply symbolic.

Each act of love brings God's kingdom on earth, a kingdom which includes everyone, and brings lasting meaning.

**“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” John 15:12**

Please share your response to this reflection to [Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](mailto:Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk) – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God' spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

**[www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](http://www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk)**