

For Shinangye: July 2006
Towards a Theology of Unity – A Series
III – New Commandment Love

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Last month, we saw that all who are baptized into Christ Jesus are members of His Church, our Christian family. They are our brothers and sisters regardless of denomination. This month, we will look at what Jesus tells us is important for us as brothers and sisters to do – His “new commandment” to us.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” (John 13:34)

The old commandment is that we love others as we love ourselves (Lev. 19:18, Mat. 22:39, etc.). The new commandment that Jesus gives us is that we love one another as *He* loved us – enough to suffer horrendous suffering and death for one another if necessary. Do you love your brothers and sisters that much? *...the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. (1 John 4:20b)*

We see that how we receive this command to love one another as Christ loved us is directly related to how well we love God. It is also directly related to our witness to the world. In John 13:35, Jesus continues his new commandment by saying, *“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

The unity that God wants us to have comes from this kind of love. It also bears witness to the Gospel. Jesus, in His great prayer to the Father for us in John, chapter 17, prays this, *“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.” (John 17:20-22)*

Jesus commands us to love one another as He loved us – “new commandment” love. As we share this love with one another, we can know that we love God and we can be confident that He is glorified as the world sees this love. We know that we must preach the Word of God for people to know of Him and receive His salvation – this is the great commission that Jesus gave to His Church. However, if we are not demonstrating the love of Christ for one another, sharing “new commandment” love, all that we say with our mouths about salvation becomes a lie. *If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. (1 Corinthians 13:1)*

As we seek to achieve true unity in love, we also know that this calls for us to have great patience with one another, being quick to forgive and overlook that which bothers us.

Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8)

Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, (1 Corinthians 13:4-5)

Christ's new commandment love can be seen as the life blood of the Body of Christ, of the Church. Without this love for one another, all our protestations of unity and desire to proclaim God are nothing. In fact, without it, we die – the Body of Christ dies. It is that which, by the breath of the Holy Spirit breathed into the Church, gives life to Christ's Body here on earth.

Our search for unity among all who are baptized into Christ's Church begins with His command to love one another as He loved us – "new commandment" love.