

# Sixth Sunday of Easter

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## Introduction

In a passage that could give license to our self-justifying tendencies, Jesus connects obedience with love and revelation with unfolding relationship.

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## Text

“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 for ever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

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## Comment

Jesus' message in this passage could discourage self-doubt. Even if the world tells us we are wrong – we could argue that others have not received the Spirit of truth that we enjoy; they do not see what we know; they have not been granted the revelation that we have. One of the best tools for resolving conflict is the humility to imagine that we ourselves are mistaken, but this passage might encourage us to hunker down in our set positions.

That is unless keeping the commandment to love means releasing the need to be right. Jesus connects love with obedience: if we love Jesus we will keep his commandments; those who keep his commandments will be loved by God. This is not a set equation with tit-for-tat results, however. It is much more fluid than that. To love is to be in relationship, one that forces us to react and respond compassionately to the other. Likewise, to obey is to be responsive in changing circumstances. And a relationship with a living God is to live by faith rather than with certainty. To love; to obey; to live in relationship: it all requires us to be change-able even as we remain reliable.

What lies beneath Jesus' words of reassurance, therefore, is not the solidity of unmoveable convictions, but the messiness of a loving relationship. Such a relationship remains real and alive only so long as its love surprises us – and so long as we are willing to respond in kind.

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## Response

To view conflict through the lens of this gospel passage is to set it within the context of relationship.

At Corrymeela we try to remember that imposing one's idea of what is right (no matter how sound the argument may be) hardly ever convinces the people with whom we are in conflict. It usually exacerbates tension and strengthens the will to resist change. Instead, getting into better relationship with the other person/group creates the space into which whatever solution might be possible can appear.

As we deal with the conflicts arising from COVID-19, and the uncertainty of how to protect people's lives and their livelihoods, the temptation will be to quickly decide a solution and to impose it on the willing and the unwilling. Something like that may be necessary in the short term. But without the long term work of building and maintaining mutually respectful relationships, the hidden hardships and underlying complexities of our societal structures will go unaddressed – and more damaging conflicts will (re)emerge.

Perhaps our best response in light of this passage is remember that lasting peace will not come with the revelation of a 'right' answer that must be applied to everyone whether they like it or not. It will come through the commandment to love one another, and with the determination to remain in relationship even with all the risk and change that requires.

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## Prayer

God who commands us to love,  
God who remains God with us:  
your answer, your solution,  
your remedy for our ills  
is not a product we can hold  
or a lesson we can recite.  
It is a life,  
a story,  
an ongoing relationship.  
It is a life that lives on for us.  
It is a story we can be a part of.  
It is a relationship we enter with you  
and with others.  
Help us remain together in love,  
responsive to one another's needs,  
and changed by our one-ness in you.  
Amen.

