

Sunday 06 May 2018: Sixth Sunday of Easter

No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends



As we look forward to celebrating the Lord's Ascension and Pentecost's coming of his promised Spirit, our Easter season is drawing to a close. The mood of today's liturgy is reflective, inviting us to take in more fully the deep implications of our Easter faith.

Standing out in today's readings is the theme of love. What more important theme is there for our restless human hearts? Yet it is so often trivialised and distorted in today's popular culture. From our earliest years we have learned to know what genuine love is, not from lessons in words, but by being loved ourselves. Today's readings invite us to recognise that the Paschal Mystery that is the centre of our Easter celebration is an expression of God's love for us, and an invitation to enter into the love of Jesus and his Father, and to give it expression in our own lives. True love expresses itself in action rather than in words. The Father's love, John's letter tells us, was expressed in our midst when he 'sent into the world his only Son, so that we could have life in him'. The words of Jesus in John's gospel remind us how complete is the gift which he brings, as an expression of the love which he shares with the Father: 'A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friend'...

Extract by John Thornhill sm - read more at [The Emmaus Series](#)

World Communications Day

[Pope Francis' message for World Communications Day](#) was released on 24 January 2018. The day will be celebrated at the Vatican and in most dioceses on 13 May however in [Australia we celebrate the day today](#)

The eighth of the Ten Commandments is 'Thou shalt not bear false witness'. We usually understand that to forbid telling lies. But bearing false witness in the ancient world was a special kind of lie that had lethal consequences. The commandment forbids us to lay false charges against our enemies or competitors. By bearing false witness people could strip their enemies of all their property and have them tortured and executed.

Understood in this grave way the commandment has more to say to our society today than to encourage us to avoid telling porkies. Damaging other people by making false charges and spreading malicious rumours about them has become a standard political tool. It has become particularly common and effective through the internet. Fake news can win elections and decide referenda. Facebook and Twitter are full of people writing hatefully of others, destroying reputations and sometimes driving young people to despair and even suicide. Programs built on false evidence and targeted at vulnerable sections of the population help poison people's minds against religious and ethnic minorities. We are beginning to understand, too, how big corporations can make money out of such behaviour.

Those who were brought up on the Catechism will know that this sort of behaviour is against the eighth commandment. It amounts to calumny and detraction. It is not wrong simply because it breaks a commandment but because it damages human lives. We should ask ourselves what we lose as human beings and communities if we lie, spread harmful rumours or try to ruin our rivals by spreading false rumours about them. Why does truth matter?

Ultimately it matters because our own personal lives and happiness depend on other people. We can flourish only if others flourish. So if we are to build a world that serves everybody well, we must be able to trust one another. In our families we need to trust that we are all committed to one another as well as to ourselves. In our work we need to be able to trust our partners' promises and agreements, and trust that the words they speak correspond to what they believe. Otherwise we could not work effectively with one another. Imagine the world we would live in if we could never trust that cheques were not forged, that agreements would not be honoured, that goods we had paid for would not be delivered and that words of love were worthless.

Our work at Jesuit Social Services depends on the trust we build with vulnerable young people. When they know they are trusted, they can begin to trust themselves and to build trusting relationships with others based on honest and true words.

In public life it is important that we be able to trust those whom we have elected and government officials. We need to be confident that in public conversation they will speak truthfully and respectfully. That is why fake news and abuse are so destructive. They encourage us to believe that others are not working for our shared good but for their own selfish ends. That cynicism would lead us to despair in the task of shaping a nation that is for all who live in it.

Fr Andy Hamilton SJ