

On behalf of my Mom, my family and myself, I want to thank everyone for their prayers, the Masses being offered for my Dad's soul, and for the finances that came up there, the generous support from this parish brought tears to my Mom's eyes when she received all the cards and everything. So I want to thank you for all that and ask you to continue to pray for my Mother. At 81, she has to pack up and move in about a month, month & a half to figure out where she's going to live because she doesn't want the house, she's never liked that house and she doesn't want to live by herself. It's interesting because I will probably inherit my Mother. That's not a bad thing because she can still move a lot, get around, cook, that kind of thing, not a bad thing. Sometime in the Fall I will probably know when Mom will come down and stay and how long she'll stay. She may become a snowbird.

As for my knees, I know there was a lot of questions and concerns about my knees. When I got up there and this area is a very hilly area, the hills are 45 degrees up and down, I couldn't do physical therapy because I couldn't find a flat surface except on the floor and the first time I tried to get up from the floor, it hurt so bad I almost blacked out, so I said, "not doing that again." So, I just walked and my Mom has two hand rails on her steps so I would do the steps as well. To tell you how well the knees are getting along, I've been walking from the house to here for every Mass since I got back, including tonight. The only problem is, right now they hate to sit down. If I sit too long they don't want to move, they start complaining. So, I've got to work on that a little bit because I want to sit down more. I'm basically lazy. I can tell you with complete and total honesty, I preplanned and paid for my funeral up there because we have the plots up there for the family and we know the funeral director. I designed my tombstone. It has the usual Father Reverend Dale A. Branson, Catholic Priest, 1958 to whenever and at the bottom it says, "Finally, no more exercise." So now I have a feeling I'll end up on the internet on the funny tombstone place. The funeral director didn't bat an eye, so I guess they have all sorts of things. So, anyway, I'm back for the deration. I may have to take off during the middle of the week in maybe the end of July first of August with a U-Haul because Mom has been storing some of my junk and my two bother's junk who live in Arizona. I have to pick that up and bring it down here and get it out of my brother's barn before one of his kids decides it's theirs. Thank you all for your support and for wanting me to come back. Some people were like, "Is he ever going to get back, is he coming back?" Guess I have to come back because the Bishop kept calling me. This one doesn't let you go away and disappear. He calls, "How are you doing? When are you coming home?"

A mother took her 3-year-old to Sunday school and as he was coming out from Sunday school she heard him say, "I don't like Jesus, I hate Jesus." She was crushed. She said, "What have we done to make this child think that way? On the way home she was like, "Ronald, Jesus loves us so much, he died on the cross for us," and on and on. She said, "Why do you hate Jesus?" Ron looked at his mom and he kind of tilted his head for a moment and then he goes, "No Mom, I don't like cheez-its, I hate cheez-its."

Jesus gives us a new command and we have heard so much, Christians are about love and God is love, and this kind of thing that we don't realize that at the time of Jesus, this was not a commandment. There wasn't love for your fellow person, there wasn't love for a stranger, there wasn't love or caring or concern or compassion for other people, pagans don't do that. They only have concern once in a while for their own family members and not always that way. You go back in the history of the world, you see pagans had no problem killing their mothers, their fathers, their wives, their sons, their daughters, whatever. There was not this compassion and love. So, this commandment is a brand new thing. In

order to understand what Jesus is getting at, we need to go back two weeks to the third Sunday of Easter when Jesus asked Peter three times, "Do you love me?" The problem with English is, as I've said many times, there's only one way to say love. There's no distinguishing between love between husband and wife, love between friends, love between you and pizza. We only have one word, but in Greek and in Hebrew, there's three. There's eros; love between husband and wife, there's philos; brotherly love, friendly love, and there's agape; unconditional love whether they're related to you or not. So, when Peter was asked by Jesus, "Do you love me?" there was actually two different types of love being asked. The first two times, Jesus asks Peter, "Peter, agape me?" Do you love me unconditionally? Because Peter had said he did and he would die before anything happened and then he denied Him when the cock crowed. Jesus is saying, "Peter, agape me?" (Do you love me unconditionally, no matter what.) Peter comes back with, "Yes Lord, philo you." (I have a friendly love for you.) The second time, Jesus does it again, "Agape Me Peter." And Peter says, "Philos Me Jesus." (I can only love you as a friend or a brother, I can't unconditionally love you.) So Jesus comes down the third time and says, "Philos Me Peter." And Peter says, "Yes Lord, that's what I've been saying." So, we have two different interactions going on here. Jesus is saying, "Peter do you love me up here?" And he says, "No, I love you down here." So, when Jesus says, "I give you a new commandment, love one another," He's saying agape each other. Be unconditional in your love for each other. "As I have loved you." God only does the one love, agape. He loves us unconditionally. All we have to do is say we're sorry. He loves us anyway, whether we're wrong or right. So He's telling us, "You must have the same love for each other that I have for you, agape." This is the thing where you want the best for that person. There's no jealousy, there's no animosity. Yes, they win the lottery of twelve million dollars and they don't need it but hey, thank God that they won it. Somebody had to. Or, you don't like them but you want them in heaven because Jesus wants them in heaven. You care about them because God cares about them. Unconditional says they're a fellow human being on the journey on this planet and we want to go to heaven and so we want everybody else to get to heaven. That's what Jesus is saying. There cannot be divisions, there cannot be animosity, there cannot be jealousy, there cannot be demands that we can't meet. All these things have to go away because we have to love each other as God loves us. If we don't love each other as God loves us, then He's already told us, "You're in trouble." So when Jesus says, "Agape," it's unconditional love. Democrats have to love Republicans. Republicans have to love Democrats. Democrats have to love Donald Trump, Republicans have to love Nancy Pelosi. Hey, this is what Jesus is saying. When the rubber hits the road, this is what Jesus is saying. We must love each other enough to see the human being, the divine in them so that they get to heaven. We want the best for them. We don't want to be saying, "They should be hit by a truck tonight," or something like that. No, Jesus is saying, "Love them as I love them, look at them as I look at them." Well, how do we do that? As Christians we're known for prayer. We're known for praying for each other, praying for people. Sometimes it's interesting, sometimes I'll say, "I'll pray for you." People are just blown away, they thank me. Once in a while I'll get somebody and they'll say, "Why? I didn't ask you to do that." Okay, I won't pray for you (that you know of). We pray for each other. And who are the people that are hardest to pray for? Who are the people hardest to love? Think about it. Family. Family are the ones we have a problem with. Those are the ones we get the sharpest with, those are the ones we get the angriest with, those are the ones that we have a hard time with. I get more people coming to confession saying, "Bless me Father for I have sinned, I yelled at my son, I yelled at wife, I yelled at my husband." Once in a while somebody comes and says, "Father I yelled at the TV and called Nancy Pelosi or Donald Trump a bad name." Once in a while, but most of the time I get family stuff because the hardest ones to love are the ones closest to us. So, prayer. Whether we like

them or not, we need to pray for them and that's the greatest thing we can do to show love. I will pray for you, I will pray that you get to heaven, I will pray that you see the truth and the light. I'll pray that you get to heaven. This is the way of agape love. This is the way that it starts because instead of getting angry say, "You know what? I'm going to pray for that person that just made me upset."

When I was in the third seminary that I was in, the final one, a sister came in on the weekends. She was teaching a class called, "Praying the News." Mainly the newspaper, they didn't have CNN back then. We were praying the newspaper and she said look at the headlines, look at the story and if it upsets you, pray about it, if you feel sorry pray about it. Pray your way through the newspaper. Pray your way through the news now that we have all these channels and ways of seeing it. Pray your way through that. It brings peace to you and it gives grace and benefits to people that we don't know about until the next life. It's hard.

Mother Teresa even addressed this. Mother Teresa said you know, loving like Christ doesn't mean we get this warm fuzzy feeling, that's eros, that's not agape love. Unconditional love like Christ's is involving a cross. It involves a bit of pain and sacrifice. And so she said this, "People are unreasonable, illogical and self-centered, love them anyway. If you do good people may accuse you of selfish motives, do good anyway. If you're successful you may win false friends and true enemies, succeed anyway. The good you do today may be forgotten tomorrow, do good anyway. Honesty and transparency make you vulnerable, be honest and transparent anyway. What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight, build anyway. People who really want help may attack you if you help them, help them anyway. Give the world the best you have and you may get hurt, give the world your best anyway. Why? Because in the final analysis all this is between you and God, not you and them. So do the love, do the prayer, because that's what Jesus is asking us. Not brotherly love, not friendly love, but unconditional love whether we like them or not, whether we want them in heaven or not, we have to pray for them to get there, because Jesus, God, wants them there.

God bless you.