

## Union with God (5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, Year B)

### 1 John 3:18-24—Obedience, Love, and Union with God

<sup>18</sup> *Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth.* <sup>19</sup> By this we shall know that we are of the truth, and reassure our hearts before him <sup>20</sup> whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. <sup>21</sup> Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God; <sup>22</sup> and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. <sup>23</sup> *And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.* <sup>24</sup> *All who keep his commandments abide in him, and he in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us.* (1 John 3:18-24)

1. Little Children = *spiritual* infants (3:18; cf. 1 John 2:12-14)
  - a. Little Children = beginners
  - b. Young men = making progress
  - c. Fathers = spiritually mature
2. Love = “love” (Greek *agapē*) (3:18)
  - a. Word: “not in word or speech”
  - b. Action: “but in deed and in truth”
3. Commandment:
  - a. Faith: “that we should believe (Greek *pisteuō*) in the name of his Son” (3:23)
  - b. Love: “and love one another” (Imitation of Christ; cf. John 13:34-35)
4. Keeping the Commandment → Mystical Union with God/mutual indwelling
  - a. “Abide/remain (Greek *menō*) in him” (3:24)
  - b. “and he in them” (3:24)
5. The Spirit: “he abides in us” through “the Spirit” (3:24; cf. John 14:15-17)

### The Living Tradition

Bede of Northumbria: Therefore, “Let God be your house and you be the house of God; abide in God and let God abide in you. *God abides in you that he may surround you, you abide in God that you may not fall*” (Augustine, *Homilies on 1 John* 9.1). Keep his commandments, hold on to charity, do not be separated from faith in him, that you may glory in his presence, and you will abide secure in him now through faith, then through sight. *And he will abide in you always...* “And by this we know that he abides in us, by the spirit which he has given us” [1 John 3:24]. In the earliest times the Holy Spirit fell upon believers and they spoke in tongues which they had never studied. But nowadays, because the holy Church does not need external signs, whoever believes in the name of Jesus Christ and has love for his brother gives witness to the Holy Spirit abiding in him. For the Holy Spirit brings it about that charity may be in man, “for charity has been poured in our hearts,” Paul says, “by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Bede,

*Commentary on 1 John 3:24* [trans. Dom David Hurst, O.S.B.].

**Questions for Discussion and Reflection (4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, Year B)**

1. The Apostle John teaches quite clearly that those who “keep” God’s commandments “abide” in him and “he in them” (1 John 3:24). Why is obedience to God’s commandment a condition of mutual indwelling?

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**For Further Reading**

1. Saint Augustine. *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*. Translated by Boniface Ramsey, O.P. Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 2008.
2. Bede the Venerable. *Commentary on the Seven Catholic Epistles*. Translated by Dom David Hurst, O.S.B. Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1985.