

Perfect Love (7th Sunday of Easter, Year B)

1 John 4:11-16—Abiding in the Love of God

¹¹ Beloved, *if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.* ¹² No man has ever seen God; *if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.* ¹³ By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ *Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.* ¹⁶ So we know and believe the love God has for us. *God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.* (1 John 4:11-16)

1. Imitatio Dei: “if God so loved us...” → Love of Neighbor (4:11)
2. Love of Neighbor: God’s love *perfected* (Greek *teleioō*) in us (4:12)
3. Confession: confession of faith → mystical union with God (4:15)
4. Mutual Indwelling: he “abides in God, and God abides in him” (4:16)

The Living Tradition

Catherine of Siena: [Jesus says to Catherine:] “*I ask you to love me with the same love with which I love you. But for me you cannot do this, for I loved you without being loved. Whatever love you have for me you owe me, so you love me not gratuitously but out of duty, while I love you not out of duty but gratuitously.* So you cannot give me the kind of love I ask of you. *This is why I have put you among your neighbors: so that you can do for them what you cannot do for me—that is, love them without any concern for thanks and without looking for any profit for yourself. And whatever you do for them I will consider done for me.* [cf. Matt 25:40]...

Do you know how you can tell when your spiritual love is not perfect? If you are distressed when it seems that those you love are not returning your love or not loving you as much as you think you love them. Or if you are distressed when it seems to you that you are being deprived of their company or comfort, or that they love someone else more than you. From these and from many other things you should be able to tell if your love for me and for your neighbors is still imperfect...” (Catherine of Siena, *Dialogue* 64; cf. Matt 25:40).

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (7^h Sunday of Easter, Year B)

1. How can the love of God be “perfected” in us by love of neighbor? What does St. Catherine of Siena say about this?

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. Catherine of Siena. *The Dialogue*. Translated by Suzanne Noffke, O.P. New York, N.Y.: Paulist, 1980.