

**Shaping the Franciscan Footprint  
Five Important Spiritual Thoughts from the Liturgy of the Word  
...and follow up for the Secular Franciscan  
May 11 – May 17**

**1 -- "This is my commandment: love one another as I love you."** (Jn 15:12)

The chaplain told this true story: it was the story of one of the patients he once had in long-term care in the VA hospital where he worked. The veteran went by the name of "Vet" because he always referred to himself as "the *veteran* of the war." The war was Vietnam and he was angry about it. It had ruined him—he was physically wounded although not that badly—but his real problem was: he had come home, he thought, to a world that did not receive him well. He felt his country was unkind; he felt his family was part of the problem. He began to abuse them, verbally mainly, but sometimes physically. Eventually his wife and child left, refusing even to talk with him. He had tried to explain, but they never came back and he became even more bitter than he was.

The chaplain explained that "Vet" began to change a little when he received a series of anonymous one-line notes on postcards in the mail. The line read "You are responsible for what you do" with the word *you* underlined. The post cards were mailed from different cities on Monday or Tuesday of each week and always the same—sometimes printed, sometimes written, sometimes typed. They kept coming for over a year and he finally began to understand some things in his life and began to change not completely, but a little. He finally found out that his wife was responsible for the postcards; they did get back together briefly before she died. But he finally began to understand that he could not blame a place or a war for his anger. *He* ultimately was responsible for who he was and what he did, but before he understood it, he had to have it placed bluntly in front of him.

"Vet" needed a blunt statement from his wife before he began to understand. Only then could he change his ways. You and I often need blunt statements that shake us out of our complacency to make us see what we are doing. For example, arguably the primary directive that Jesus gave us while he was here on earth was to love one another. It is a relatively blunt statement that should make us understand this idea of love of others:

*Love one another as I love you.*

Think of that: "as I love you" is a divine love, therefore much deeper than a human love and that is the love we should have for one another.

We have all heard that plea to love from Jesus and the Scripture hundreds of times, but, let's face it, people are still not as loving as they should be. In fact, there continue to be situations where there is a lack of love. That is certainly true on a national / international level: Christian people who are not loving. But perhaps on our own level, we are not loving the way we should: in our work place, our family, our home, our lives, and these words should apply to us. But often they do nothing—we just listen to them, and say "I wish so and so would listen" or "I'm doing this already" or "My circumstances are different." It seems that the Lord can do nothing to get us to understand that he is talking to us.

One rather negative spiritual author says simply that Christian people in America have lost their spark; that we are just going through the motions without any hope that their spiritual lives will catch fire. We need a shock to our system so that we can catch fire.

The question becomes then: what will it take to make us understand that we have to love others? We will not have anyone like “Vet’s” wife because probably no one will take the time to do it. And so basically, Christians have to rely on the power of Jesus’ words—and that should be enough for a Christian. We must really hear Jesus’ directive maybe for the first time: **if you are a Christian, you must love everyone, no exceptions.**

There was a popular song a couple of years ago that was a normal love song, but the title was a good one. The title was “Let Love In.” Perhaps we should look at love of others and then allow ourselves to be shocked. Imagine that Jesus comes up to us right now, points his finger at us, and says: there is love lacking in your life—you are the man / woman. Now is the time to let love in.

**2 -- "When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me. (Jn 15:26)**

...The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. Do I consider myself to be a person who always tells the truth?

**3 -- "And when he comes he will convict the world." (Jn 16:8)**

...Have I allowed the world to have too much of a hold in my life?

**4 – "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." (Jn 14:18)**

...When I am lonely, I must understand that the Lord through the Spirit is with me.

**5 -- But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth. (Jn 16:13)**

...Again, Jesus has us think about the truth. I might take the opportunity to ask forgiveness for the times when I have not been truthful.

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