

The Laws of Love

Sixth Sunday of Easter – Jn 14:15-21

Ave Maria Catholic Church, May 14, 2023 – Fr. David M Vidal

In today's gospel, Jesus proclaims that the Father loves us. In another passage of the gospel of John, Jesus also reveals that "*God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life*" (John 3: 16).

Nobody understood Jesus's message better than his Mother and First Disciple, the Blessed Virgin Mary. For this reason, as we celebrate Mother's Day this weekend, it will be appropriate to listen to her, our Blessed Mother, and learn from her the true meaning of love.

In one of the chapters of his book, *The World's First Love*, the Venerable Fulton Sheen presents some *laws of love* inspired by the words and life of our Blessed Mother.

This is the first law: "Love Is a Choice."

Every act of love is an affirmation: "*I love you.*" And since the affirmation establishes a preference, that act also includes negations. Because love is a choice, it also means detachment from people and things. One of the clear examples is found in the Old Testament law (that is also inscribed in human nature): "*A man, therefore, will leave his father and mother and will cling to his wife.*" (Gen. 2:24) There is a detachment because man does not live with his parents anymore, and there is also a deep sense of attachment to the beloved with whom he started a new life.

Mary made that choice. When the Archangel Gabriel announced the plan of salvation, Mary asked: "*How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?*" (Lk 1:34). Mary's question reveals her willing desire to be consecrated to God, and the Archangel's answer confirms that her choice will be honored: "*The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.*" (Lk 1:35).

This is the second law of love: "Choice Ends in Identification with the Beloved."

All love desires unity. Once the will makes a choice, surrender follows. In Mary's words, that was her "fiat" (be it done to me according to your word). After Mary's "fiat," Jesus, true God and true man, lives in her womb. No person in this world has ever experienced such unity with the One whom the Heavens cannot contain.

However, Mary's unity with her Son goes far beyond the physical union. Jesus explains that Mary's motherhood is founded on a profound spiritual bond. Then, when someone in the crowd told Jesus that her mother was outside asking for him, Jesus replied: "*Who are*

my mother and [my] brothers?” . . . Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.” (Mc 3: 32-35).

That is also Mary’s understanding of her maternity, when at the wedding at Cana in Galilee, she not only implores a miracle as a mother but also knows the heart of her Son, and without delay asks the servants: *“Do whatever He tells you.”* (John 2:5).

This is the third law of love: “Love Requires a Constant fight against Selfishness.”

In his writing, the Venerable Fulton Sheen says: *“It is easy to take the beloved for granted and to assume that what was freely offered for life needs no repurchasing. But love can be treated either as an antique that needs no care, or as a flower that needs pruning.”*

True love needs constant care, pruning, and sacrifices. We must never take it for granted. This is another example that our Blessed Mother gives to us. After being declared the Mother of the Savior of the World, the Emmanuel, God-with-us, Mary could dwell in her gift or put her gift at the service of others.

Mary obeys this third law of love, and even during her pregnancy, she visits and assists her cousin Elizabeth who is expecting a child. From that day, no one who boasts of his love for God may claim exemption from the law to love his neighbor. Mary hastens to visit her cousin Elizabeth. The bearing of Christ is inseparable from the service of Christ. Love is generous and communicative. True love is not self-seeking, but true love looks for the good of the other.

This is the fourth law of love: “Love Is Inseparable from Joy.”

Is it not the greatest joy for a woman when she brings a child into the world? Joy is fulfillment, and love brings fulfillment. Joy is completeness, and love brings fullness.

It is no surprise that the very first act Mary performs after the Annunciation and the Incarnation is to sing and magnify the greatness of God. The words of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth reveal love and joy.

Fulton Sheen discovers a unique element in Mary’s song. He says: *“All mothers sing to their babies, but here is one mother who sings before the Babe is born.”* Mary sings and magnifies God’s love for her and for all generations. Mary rejoices in God’s plan of salvation and the fulfillment of his promises. Mary’s joy is rooted in God’s love.

Finally, this is the fifth law of love: “Love Is Inseparable from Sorrow.”

When a lover is separated from the beloved, the lover feels sorrow. This is what Mary tells us when She experienced the loss of the child Jesus in the Temple. With anguish, Joseph

and Mary looked for Jesus, and when they found Him, she asked: “*Son, why have you done this to us? We have been looking for you with great anxiety.*” (Lk 2: 48).

That will not be Mary’s greatest sorrow. At the foot of the cross, Mary will feel the sorrow of a sword piercing her heart at the death of Jesus. And Mary suffers and loves. Mary suffers and offers the death of His Son Jesus for the new sons and daughters given to her as a command by Jesus himself. Mary makes her sorrow an act of worship and offers it as a sacrifice acceptable to God.

As we reflect today on our Blessed Mother’s lessons on love, let us ask through her intercession to choose God and truly desire our union with Him, to identify ourselves with his laws and beautiful plan of creation and redemption. Let us ask to accept God’s plan with joy and be ready to sacrifice ourselves so that His will might be accomplished in our lives and the lives of our brethren. Amen