

6TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I offer you a brief reflection on the words of the Apostle Paul (Rom. 12:6-14)

Love is an action; love is service.

Love is a feeling of deep devotion, care, and commitment.

God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Love for God and neighbor is what characterizes us as His children.

One day a grandson asked, "Grandma, do you love me?" She replied, "Yes, Michael, I really love you." Then he asked her again, "How do you know that you love me?" She described her feelings to him and told him everything she did and was willing to do for him. In my family, my mother learned the same thing from Mykhailo, asking just as shrewdly, "How do you know that you love me?" His innocent and sincere answer was, "I love you because I feel it in my heart." The way Mykhailo treated his grandmother with love that day showed that love is a combination of both actions and deep feelings.

The Apostle John the Theologian, is also called the apostle of love, because he not only loved Christ, but also had great love for his neighbors. He constantly reminded people to live in peace and love, repeating the same words, "Children, love one another," because he who keeps this commandment keeps everything. In his epistles, John addresses the people, "We will love God because He has loved us. And he who does not love does not know God, because God is love. He who loves God must love his neighbor." But what is the essence of love? The Apostle Paul tells us clearly about this, saying that "love is longsuffering, tenderhearted, love is not jealous, it is not magnified, it is not proud. He who loves, believes in everything, always hopes, endures everything, love never ceases."

That is why we must love our neighbors and even our enemies, because the Lord Himself says, "I give you this commandment, love one another." From this we see how much Jesus Christ wanted us to live in love. But it is important to have this love not only in words, but also to prove it by your actions. A good example is the Apostle and Evangelist John the

Theologian, himself, who, passing through the preaching of the Gospel in the cities of Asia Minor, saw in one of them a young man who was capable and talented, with good mental qualities. Taking him in, the apostle taught the young man faith and Christian truth, and, going to preach, left him to the bishop of that city, saying, "I entrust this boy to you, the Holy Church and the Holy Spirit, to be witnesses. Protect him from all evil." The bishop received the young man, raising him as his own son. And when the boy became an adult, seeing his piety and humility, the bishop began to look less at him. Then the boy succumbed to sinful habits. He met vicious people, started stealing, drank, and eventually went to the mountains and became the head of a gang of robbers. After a while, the Apostle John returned to that city and, seeing the bishop, began to ask him to bring the boy he had once entrusted to him. The bishop said, with tears in his eyes, "The boy died - he died in his soul, and his body became a robber." Then the apostle said to the bishop, "Did you need to protect your brother's soul, and asking him for a guide, went to look for the lost soul." When John the Theologian approached the area, the thieves seized the saint and brought him to the head of his gang, but when he saw the apostle, he fled. Then St. John, in spite of his old age, began calling the fugitive, addressing him, "My son, why are you fleeing from me, your father? I beg you, stop, have mercy on me an old man, you still have hope for salvation. I will answer to God for you, I will give my soul for you, as Christ gave His for us. The Lord has sent me to grant you forgiveness of sins. I will suffer for you, may the blood you shed be on me, may all your sins pass to me." Hearing such words, the young man stopped, threw down his weapon, and in fear and trembling, stood before the holy old man, shedding tears of shame. The apostle, in turn, fell at his feet and asked him to have pity on his soul and return to the bosom of the Holy Church. With his soul returned, he was no longer dying and could return home.

Here, dear brothers and sisters, must be true Christian love. This love makes us children of God, Jesus Christ, Himself, said, "No one has more love than this, who gives his life for his neighbors."

I wish each of you peace, God's blessing, and long life.

Fr. Serhii Deiak