

Jesus said: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, *if you have love for one another.*”

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One of the challenges of being a *priest* is that we usually have *no* illusions about the *church*...or *human beings*...and hopefully we don't have any illusions about *ourselves* as priests either. We are all so incredibly *human*—with everything that goes with that.

Every morning, I read a compendium of news articles on churches, mostly in America. And *church news* is much like *newspaper news*—it is full of people making mistakes, conflict, misconduct, and division. There *are* stories about good things, but--news being what it is—church news is often hard to take.

Sometimes I wonder what it might be like to be someone who is *not* involved in a church--and there they are picking up on things like that in the newspaper news. Would they want to go to the trouble of trying to go to church and trying to understand the teachings of the church? How would they take the leap to be here--or another church?

*Well, how is it that we are all still here?* Because, even if we've had our own disillusioning experiences with church sometime somewhere, we have also had experiences with *disciples who could be recognized by their love*. Jesus was absolutely right that *that* makes all the difference in the world.

If we took a few minutes we could each come up with the names of Christians who *loved us into faith*...and who *loved us into loving others*. That has a lot to do with why we are all still here, in church.

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But Holy Week takes us even further. This week we may remember the *source* of those precious disciples in our lives. In the midst of everything that can be disillusioning in the Holy Week stories of Jesus' suffering and death—the failures of his friends...and the violent misunderstanding of strangers—we witness in these stories *our Master, our Teacher, our Savior, our God...who kept on loving...right on through all that*.

Jesus is the same today as before.

*Jesus still loves his friends.*

*Jesus still loves those who do not yet know him.*

*Jesus still loves us all to the very end.*

*Steady. And true.*

That is *really* why we are all still here.