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Dear Parishioners of Our Lady's, St Anne's and St. Jerome's

'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind'

How is it possible to command someone to love? Surely love is meant to happen freely and grows from attraction. To command someone to love you is surely missing the point? I think the answer is found in the question put to Jesus by the Pharisees; 'which is the greatest of the commandments?'

Jesus makes clear that the commandments were given to help God's People to understand that God comes first. He is the beginning and final end of everything, and that above all else He is Love. This is His Name. But this love is not given to us to keep for ourselves, to lock away. It is given to us so that we can give it away freely. For that is how we received it. Therefore, 'you must love your neighbour as yourself'.

There is a great difference between love and liking. I may like a particular person who is easy to love. But what about those I don't like? Those different to me, whom I rarely speak to? It's a big ask! How do I even begin with this?

We all feel the need to love and be loved. But God shows us that this is just the beginning. He speaks to us from deep within our hearts, inviting us to listen to Him, to spend time with Him and to come to know Him better. It is in this deepening relationship with God that we begin to sense what it feels like to be loved by Him. It is God's love, alive in us and flowing through us, that is to be shared with others. It takes my own poor loving and sweeps it up into something much greater, much more powerful. God does not like us, He loves us! He loves us regardless of what we have or have not done. He asks us to do the same for each other.

May the love of God grow in our hearts and radiate to all those with whom we live, work and come into contact with.

Father John



Our Lady of Compassion

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