



Walking in Love

“This is love; that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it” (II John 6)

How easy it is to say, “I love you.” But to put your love in action is quite a bit more difficult. Consider the love walks we take liturgically: Circling the font at baptisms, the tetrapod at weddings, and the holy altar at ordinations. Always counterclockwise, they sum up the past and follow Christ into the future. They all are filled with joy of anticipation, harbingers of future promise. We are happy and eager to walk in the love expressed at anniversaries of those unique events—that’s pleasant. But to walk in love and to keep on going with them when the one we love is ill, out of sorts, or experiencing difficult times—being with them when they are not in the mood for affection is not much fun. To walk in love to the nursing homes and visit those who no longer walk can at times be trying. To go to court with one we love, or to visit the shut-ins, the hospitalized, those in bereavement and offer to work through the anguish they suffer requires a love that is given to us through grace from Jesus Christ by way of the Holy Spirit. If you are not willing to walk into and through another’s experience of death with one you say you love, you have not arrived at the state of love demanded of a true Christian.

To accompany somebody we love when the police call and report an accident to one of their family members, or to the hospital when someone is critically ill—that’s when love is put into motion. To walk in love to the cemetery and be there when the tears and sobs come is to walk in Christ’s love with the one we love.

In our time we drive to be with the one we love, or we make ourselves available near our phones so that he or she will know that it’s alright to visit and share their emotional state. When you walk in love, you give off indications that your heart is open for visiting anytime. There are no business hours for your affection to be called on. You relish your privacy, yet you are ever ready to set it aside whenever those you love are in need of comfort, solace and affection.

When you say, “I love you,” if you don’t mean that you are prepared to go willingly into any situation, then you are setting borders and limits to your love. Unconditional love, imitating the love of Jesus Christ for all God’s children is what the evangelist John means in his brief letter to true Christians. It’s different from the love expressed in most pop songs, escapist novels and celebrity chatter. Christian love transcends sexual expressions of love, despite the ardor of sensuality. When we gaze upon our loving Lord Jesus on the crucifix we wear at our necks or display on the walls of our homes, we begin to realize the implications of true love. If we are not able to contemplate the response to His love in the saints, walking with Mary Magdalene and the other Myrrhbearers to the tomb on resurrection day, or with the Holy Mother of God and the very author of the words about walking in love as he did with her to watch the One they love being put to death in such an agonizing manner, we should realize that we are far from being able to understand the implications of walking in love. If that’s the case, then our definition of the love walk is nearer to what the secular world means than what the evangelist is expressing.