



Grand Chaplain's Corner

By RW Grand Chaplain Pat Thompson



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I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another (John 13:34).

The speaker here is none other than Jesus in this section of John's gospel commonly referred to as *the farewell discourses of Jesus*. As he prepares to face his death, Jesus is shoring up his beloved disciples with words of comfort and instruction.

I find it compelling that the overarching theme of Jesus' earthly ministry turns on the axis of brotherly love and service. As Masons, we have pledged ourselves to that very ideal. Jesus does not place emphasis on any sort of dogma; he merely mandates that his disciples are to replicate his love. Nothing more and certainly nothing less than self-giving love. The Greek word is *agape* (a-ga-pay). It connotes a love that places others always first.

The venerable C. S. Lewis once wrote, "So, there are 4 kinds of 'love', all good in their proper place, but *Agape* is the best because it is the kind God has for us and is good in all circumstances... I can practice *Agape* to God, Angels, Man & Beast, to the good & the bad, the old & the young, the far and the near."

Next to *agape*, the other pure form of love quite familiar to Masons is *filios* or "brotherly love." I have always declared that Masonic affection is pure (or *is meant* to be!) precisely because it is an unembarrassed affection between men. I have not served in a military unit, but I have been in the fire service. I can tell you that there is a deep and lasting bond between men (and women) who see themselves as being in service to others—sometimes in life-threatening circumstances.

In my own lodge, we have had much fun over the years, smiling slyly at the puzzlement of the ladies who had been preparing our Master Mason dinners with queries like, "Just what were you guys doing up there?" Sometimes the ruffians got out of hand, and the whole experience was just another bond of our fraternal community.

Shakespeare places memorable words of brotherly affection on the lips of King Henry before the Battle of Agincourt in his famous St. Crispin's Day speech: "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers; For he today that sheds his blood with me shall be my brother..."

We are not called to battle, but we are clearly called upon to remember what binds us.

Faithfully and fraternally,

Pat