

While serving in the United States Navy, it became almost immediately obvious that nearly every job – what we called Navy Enlisted Classification Codes, or NEC – required some sort of security clearance.

A security clearance is an official determination that a person can have access to information classified by the government. And there are levels of security clearances. Each level grants access to information in that level and perhaps some of the levels below it. All based on what was known as “need to know.”

For an individual to receive a clearance requires a background investigation – which can be quite extensive – and the signing of a nondisclosure agreement – that binds the holder of the clearance to secrecy ... sometimes for life.

The investigation involves agents contacting former employers and coworkers and other individuals who may know the person. Things typically checked are employment; education; affiliations; local agencies; including where the person has lived, worked, or gone to school; and interviews with persons who know the person.

Security clearances range from Unclassified, to Confidential ... then Secret ... Top Secret ... and Sensitive Compartmented Information – known as SCI.

Without the appropriate clearance, it was impossible, not only to do certain high level jobs, but also would make it impossible to even train for certain jobs.

Today is the Sixth Sunday of Easter. And in today’s Gospel, Jesus tells His disciples the Great Commandment:

*love one another as I love you.*

And in what may sound a bit puzzling, Jesus tells the disciples:

*I have called you friends,  
because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.*

Now the word translated here as “friend” actually has a broader meaning than that in the original Greek. The word *philos* in Greek implies an “inner circle.”

And knowing this, it makes more sense. Having been made members of Jesus’ inner circle; the disciples now know “*everything [Jesus has] heard from [His] Father.*”

And what are these “secrets” that Jesus has told his disciples?

In the fourth chapter of St. John’s Gospel, when Jesus is speaking with Nicodemus, He reveals that “*God is spirit.*” And later on, in St. John’s First

Epistle, he relates even more of Jesus' teaching when he tells us that "*God is love,*" and that "*God is light.*"

While these things may not seem like enormous secrets to us, in listening to our Second Reading and Gospel, they are essential to fulfilling Jesus' command to *love one another as I love you.*

Otherwise, we may be tempted to limit our understanding of "love" to a worldly or cultural view of love. Society seems to see love as an emotion or an affection. Yet when we understand that Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross – dying to save us from our sins – was not a gushy romantic event, but rather a very substantial and down-to-earth demonstration of God's will for all humanity ... we can begin to understand how we are to live out our Christian calling "*in spirit and in truth,*" by following "*the Light of Christ*" and by "*loving as God and Christ have loved us.*"

The first reading helps us better understand the way that we experience God's love in our lives.

The Sacraments – what Churches of the East call "the Mysteries" – give us the first taste of God's light and love in our lives. In Baptism, we are made members of Christ through His Death ... in Confirmation we receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit ... and in the Eucharist, we are strengthened and renewed in our commitment to live out the life of the Holy Trinity ... every day ... in our own lives.

The fruit of living in the Spirit, in the Light of Christ, and in God's Love is first and foremost Peace. Throughout the Easter Season Jesus has been saying to us "Peace I leave you" ... and His Peace is not the same as the World's peace.

The same can be said of God's Love: not as the World loves ... does God love. And today, Jesus reveals another fruit of living out our Christian discipleship: and that is Joy.

Eternal life ... God's peace ... unconditional Love ... and divine Joy ... These are the gifts we share in Jesus Christ ... gifts the World cannot give.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... [and today, as these children receive for the first time – this great Mystery of Our Faith – the Blessed Eucharist] ... let us pray in thanksgiving for so great a gift ... the gift of the Life of God ... revealed in the Light of Christ ... and bestowed on us in the fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control.