

The Church speaks in the first reading with a voice that is calm, clear, and full of authority:

**“It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...”**

Notice those words carefully.

Not: “We think.”

Not: “In our opinion.”

Not: “This feels right.”

The Holy Spirit and the Church together.

That is how the Faith moves through history.

Not by fashion.

Not by pressure.

Not by whatever the age demands.

The Holy Spirit guiding the Church founded by Christ.

And what decision is made?

Not to crush souls.

Not to place unnecessary burdens upon them.

Not to turn the path to heaven into something impossible to walk.

And when the people receive the message, we are told: **“They rejoiced.”**

Because truth received properly does not suffocate the soul. It brings light.

The world thinks truth restricts freedom. But falsehood enslaves. Truth frees.

And then the Gospel opens the deepest truth of all.

Christ says: **“This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you.”**

And suddenly we understand: The Church removes false burdens—

because Christ reveals the true burden. Love.

Not sentimental love. Not soft love.

Not love reduced to feelings. The love of the Cross.

“As I have loved you.” That is the measure.

And how has He loved us?

Unto death. Unto the shedding of blood.

Unto the total offering of Himself to the Father.

The Cross is not simply something Christ endured.

It reveals what divine love actually is.

Love that gives.

Love that sacrifices.

Love that remains faithful even when rejected.

And then Christ says words that should shake every soul:

**“Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”**

That is Calvary already standing in the room.

The apostles do not fully understand yet.

But the shadow of the Cross is already falling across the Gospel.

And Christ is teaching them: Love will cost you everything.

The Catholic Faith has never hidden this.

Christ did not come merely to comfort mankind.

He came to save mankind. And salvation passes through sacrifice.

That is why every true love wounds the heart.

A mother staying awake beside a sick child.

A husband remaining faithful through suffering.

A priest pouring himself out for souls.

A Christian forgiving when pride demands revenge.

This is laying down one's life.

Not always in one great moment. But slowly. Daily. Through hidden fidelity.

And yet notice something astonishing.

Christ says: **“I have called you friends.”**

The eternal Son of God says this to weak and sinful men who will soon abandon Him.

Peter will deny Him.

The others will flee.

And still Christ says: Friends.

Because His love is greater than human weakness.

But friendship with Christ is not casual.

It is not comfortable companionship while we continue living however we wish.

A friend of Christ must walk where Christ walks.

And where does Christ walk?

Toward Calvary.

Toward obedience to the Father.

Toward total self-giving.

That is why the saints are so grave and yet so full of joy.

Because they understand something the world does not:

A life spent protecting the self becomes small and bitter.

But a life given away in Christ becomes fruitful.

Then Christ says something even deeper:

**“You did not choose me. I chose you.”**

Everything begins there.

Grace first.

Before your prayers.  
Before your efforts.  
Before your sacrifices.

He chose you.

He called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.

And that should humble us profoundly.

Because no one earns divine friendship. It is given.

And then comes the mission: **“I appointed you to go and bear fruit.”**

Not to remain comfortable.

Not merely to preserve ourselves. Fruit.

Souls brought to God.  
Lives transformed.  
Holiness growing quietly within ordinary life.

But Christ says something else: **“Fruit that will last.”**

Most things in this world do not last.

Money passes.  
Beauty fades.  
Success disappears.  
Even nations rise and fall.

But love lived in Christ enters eternity.

Every hidden sacrifice offered in grace remains before God forever.

That changes how we see life.

Nothing done in Christ is wasted.

No act of charity.  
No hidden prayer.  
No suffering carried faithfully.

All of it enters eternity.

And now the first reading becomes even more beautiful.

The Church does not weigh people down unnecessarily because souls are precious.

The Church exists to bring souls into communion with Christ.

Not endless burdens. Not empty rules.

But the truth that saves. And that truth always leads to love.

The love revealed on the Cross.

And this is why the Eucharist stands at the centre of Catholic life.

Because at the altar, the sacrifice of divine love becomes present.

The same Christ who speaks these words tonight gives His Body and Blood.

The same Heart that says: "I have called you friends"

opens itself again for His people.

And here is the grave reality.

A soul can hear all this and still remain untouched.

Still remain distant.

Still protect itself from God.

Because Christ forces no one.

Love invites.

Love calls.

Love offers itself.

But it must be received.

And so the Gospel tonight stands before us with both tenderness and severity.

Christ calls us friends.

But friendship with Him demands conversion.

It demands sacrifice.

It demands that we learn to love as He loves.

Not selectively.

Not comfortably.

But cruciformly.

And yet there is hope in all of this.

Because Christ never commands without giving grace.

The Heart that asks for love also gives the power to love.

The Cross that wounds also saves.

And the soul that remains close to Christ slowly becomes capable of what once seemed impossible.

Forgiveness.

Patience.

Fidelity.

Sacrifice.

Not by human strength alone—

but because divine life is growing within.

So tonight the Church places before us the true shape of holiness.

Not endless burdens.

Not shallow comfort.

But friendship with Christ crucified.

A friendship that costs everything—

and yet gives everything.

Because those who remain in His love begin already to share in the joy of heaven itself.