



One

Jesus' Promise

Knowing from hearsay is one thing; experience is quite another. This is especially true about knowing people. When we say that we know someone, we normally mean a lot more than that we have heard of the person. We usually mean that we know him or her personally, that we have met, that we have had direct dealings. We cannot say we *know* someone unless we have had personal, direct experience of that person.

Fans who keep books full of photographs and biographical data of a favorite sportsman or entertainer will treasure infinitely more a few seconds of face-to-face encounter with that person. Real experience, even in a fleeting contact, means so much more than theoretical knowledge.

Why is it that we don't apply this to our knowledge of God? Why do so many people still think that *believing* consists in "accepting as true" certain information about God? Why is it that in religious instruction, preaching and spiritual books, so much stress is laid on teaching people *about* God? Are we perhaps under the impression that we shall be better Christians the more we know *of* God? But what will the average Christian say when we ask him pointblank whether he *knows* God? I remember vividly how on one occasion, as a young missionary in India, I had to address Hindu college students. One of them asked me the question: "Have you experienced God?" I was taken aback for a moment, not only because it required a personal witness, but also because no one had ever asked me that question before. Yet it is the central

question if we want to test the reality of our faith.

Contrary to what many seem to think, being a Christian means knowing God personally. Experience of God is not reserved to anchorites or mystics; it is a recognizable reality in the life of every Christian. In this chapter I will show that Jesus himself promised such an experience to every one of his followers.

Witnesses

The early church accorded a special place of honor to the apostles and others who had known Jesus personally. They were known as "eyewitnesses" (Lk 1:2) or "those who have seen the Lord" (Polycarp). These privileged witnesses played a special role in announcing the Good News (Acts 10:39-42). John the Evangelist was one of them. Frequently he stressed that he had direct access to the facts. "The one who saw this happen has spoken of it. . . . What he said is true, and he knows that he speaks the truth" (Jn 19:35). "We write to you about the Word of life. . . . We have heard it, and we have seen it with our eyes; yes, we have seen it, and our hands have touched it" (1 Jn 1:1).

When in those early years a community of Christians would come together to celebrate the eucharistic meal on a Sunday, it must have been a great thrill to have one of these eyewitnesses present. We may well imagine that the person would be invited to narrate a personal experience of Christ and that questions would be asked about the historical circumstances of Jesus' words or deeds. Meeting an eyewitness, one who had seen the Lord, was like shaking hands with a well-known television star.

The prominence of such eyewitnesses, however, also had its drawbacks. For one thing, contact with them was bound to diminish as the years went by and

Christian communities became more widely scattered. Secondly, too much attention given to the few who had known Jesus in Palestine might leave ordinary Christians with a sense of frustration. Indians have a proverb: "No plant will grow under the banyan tree." Stress on the privileged knowledge of the few eyewitnesses might make the ordinary Christian's knowledge of Jesus look inadequate.

The New Testament repeatedly refers to this problem. Being able to testify to the facts of Jesus' life has value for the gospel; but the direct experience of Christ, which every Christian can have, is much more valuable. Paul says, "Even if at one time we judged Christ according to human standards, we no longer do so" (2 Cor 5:16). In the famous episode with Thomas, Christ says, "Do you believe because you see me [in the flesh]? How happy are those who believe without seeing me [in this way]!" (Jn 20:29). In other words, there is another way of knowing Jesus much more desirable than having seen him at work in Nazareth or Jerusalem.

Confronted with this problem, the early Christians will have asked the questions that also come to us: What is this special knowledge of Jesus which everyone can have? Can we too know him personally in some way or other? How can we be sure that he is with us? In what way can we recognize his presence? Has Jesus himself said anything about this?

It is mostly in St. John's gospel that we find answers to these questions. We know John wrote his gospel much later than the other evangelists. Whereas Matthew, Mark and Luke tried to present Jesus' words and deeds in a way that would help new converts to believe in him, John paid more attention to the problems of those who had been Christians for a long time. In particular, John devoted a great part of his gospel to describing aspects of the Christian's union with Christ.

Jesus' Words at the Last Supper

For our present purpose one particular passage stands out. It contains a very clear promise on the part of Jesus that he will make his presence known to each and every Christian worthy of the name. The text is so full of meaning that it deserves a thorough examination.

- verse 18 "I shall not leave you as orphans:
I am coming back to you.
- verse 19 In just a little while the world will not see me anymore; but *you will see me* because I have life and you will have life.
- verse 20 On that day you will recognize that I am in the Father, and you are in me, and I in you.
- verse 21 Whoever keeps the commandments that he has from me is the man who loves me; and the man who loves me will be loved by my Father,
and *I shall love him*
and *reveal myself to him.*"
- verse 22 "Lord," said Judas (not Judas Iscariot), "what can have happened that you are going to reveal yourself to us and not to the world?"
- verse 23 Jesus answered,
"If anyone loves me,
he will keep my word.
Then *my Father will love him,*
and *we shall come to him*
and *make our dwelling place with him*"
(Jn 14:18-23, AB, italics added).

Let us remember the context of these words. Jesus was speaking to his apostles at the Last Supper, at the close of his public ministry. He was about to die, rise and be taken up to heaven. In one way he was taking leave of his disciples. Yet in another way — and this seems exactly the point he was making — there

was no need for him to take leave. He would be coming back. He would return and remain present to his disciples.

What did Jesus mean by this "return," by this lasting presence? Different suggestions have been made:

- (a) Jesus referred to the *apparitions* after the resurrection. The apostles would see him alive again in spite of his crucifixion and death.
- (b) Jesus meant his return at the end of time, the *parousia*, when he would show himself "sitting at the right side of the Almighty and coming on the clouds of heaven!" (Mt 26:64).
- (c) Jesus promised a very real but *spiritual* presence recognizable in the consciousness of his disciples.

A careful reading of Jesus' words excludes the first two possibilities. First of all, Jesus cannot have referred just to the apparitions. He appeared after his resurrection only to a limited number of persons and that in the course of just a few weeks' time; but the promise of Jesus' return is unrestricted. Twice (both in verses 21 and 23) Jesus promises to reveal himself to *anyone* who keeps his commandments. This promise was directed not only to his apostles, but to all those who were to believe in him through their preaching and to all his future disciples without restriction (Jn 17:20).

Secondly, a reference to the *parousia* is ruled out because Jesus stated explicitly during his trial that his Second Coming will be public and will be seen by all (Mt 26:64). But here, at the Last Supper, he spoke of a return that would only be recognized by his disciples, not by people who don't believe ("The world will not see me anymore," verse 19).

A Spiritual Reality

Jesus' promise that he will return and be present to the disciples must be taken, therefore, to point to a

spiritual presence that will form part of their Christian experience. This is not an exceptional interpretation of the text. B. Lindars sums up his view of Jesus' return in these words: "It is a form of manifestation which is not accessible to the world (hence not the Parousia), nor confined to a privileged few among Christians (hence not a Resurrection appearance), but is open to all who have the right disposition for union with God. *It must, then, be an interior apprehension of Jesus and the Father in the hearts of those who love Jesus.* This can hardly be a mystical experience of an esoteric kind, which would not be accessible to all."¹

J. H. Bernard points out that Jesus' self-revelation possesses also a strictly personal aspect. It implies the illumination of the heart of the individual disciple. Jesus says, "I will manifest myself to *him*," not to the world. Bernard sums up the whole passage as containing "the assurance that he will, in truth, manifest himself to every loving and obedient disciple."²

Another commentator, J. Keulers, calls Jesus' return to his disciples a mystical experience. By this, Keulers does not mean that this experience is reserved to a few with extraordinary spiritual gifts, but that the experience lies on the unspeakable level of man's encounter with God.³

Perhaps the most penetrating and extensive Catholic commentary on St. John's gospel in recent years was written by R.E. Brown. In his exposition of the verses we have been considering, Brown comes to the same conclusion we arrived at, but allows for various stages in the transmission and understanding of Jesus' words. He writes:

It is obvious that Jesus is speaking of a more continued presence than was possible in the brief period of post-resurrectional appearances—not only the words "I shall not leave you orphans" but the whole tone of his remarks imply permanency. Therefore, if originally these verses referred to Jesus' coming back in a series of post-resurrectional appearances, they were soon

reinterpreted in Johannine circles to refer to a more abiding and non-corporeal presence of Jesus after the resurrection. . . . This reinterpretation grew out of the profound insight that the real gift of the post-resurrectional period was a union with Jesus that was not permanently dependent on bodily presence.⁴

In short, Brown maintains (and rightly, perhaps; one should read his whole exposé) that Jesus' promise was first understood to refer to the apparitions; and that the full sense of pointing to his permanent presence was realized somewhat later. Such a growth in awareness within the early Christian community is only natural and can be documented by other examples. For our purpose it may be sufficient to note that such a gradual unfolding and deepening of meaning does not weaken the fundamental fact of Jesus' promise. On the contrary, it strengthens it. Jesus said: "I have much more to tell you, but now it would be too much for you to bear. When, however, the Spirit comes, who reveals the truth about God, he will lead you into all the truth" (Jn 16:12-13). It is important for us to realize that John, when giving us Jesus' words at the Last Supper, presents them in such a way that we could not possibly fail to interpret them as promising Jesus' real, spiritual presence to every Christian. This is what John, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wanted us to understand. And he wanted us to know that his had been Jesus' intention, that this is what Jesus had really meant (even if, in the beginning, some people had interpreted his words as referring to the apparitions). Jesus' words: "I am coming back to you. . . . I will reveal myself to you," are addressed to each and every one of us.

Can Jesus' Presence Be Noticed?

Accepting the obvious meaning of the verses and the agreement of many commentators that Jesus is speaking of a manifestation of himself to the individual

disciple, we should probe further and ask: What does this manifestation of Jesus consist in? And, especially, can this presence of Jesus be noticed?

Some theologians in the past linked Jesus' manifestation to the invisible presence of grace in the heart of the believer. A. Wikenhauser, for example, offered the following explanation:

The revelation spoken of in Jn 14:22 is identical to the Father's and Jesus' coming to the believer in an invisibly spiritual manner, to the Divine persons taking their abode in the believers.⁵

But such an invisible indwelling by the Father and the Son, however precious in itself, cannot be called an *experience*. It cannot be seen, or recognized, or felt. Its presence is known to us only by faith. It does not have the impact of a face-to-face encounter. It misses the thrill of meeting a person. Did Jesus mean such a spiritual but intangible presence, or something more dramatic and subject to real experience?

I Will Reveal Myself

A study of Jesus' words makes clear that he speaks about more than just an indwelling known by faith. Take Jesus' words: "My Father will love whoever loves me; I too will love him and reveal myself to him" (Jn 14:21). When scripture says that God "reveals" himself to someone, it means that God makes that person experience his presence in a special way. Moses had worked for Yahweh and prayed to him for many years; but this knowledge was quite different from the personal encounter he had when Yahweh "revealed" himself on the mountain.

The Bible gives us a vivid description of the event:

Moses said to Yahweh, "See, you yourself say to me, 'Make the people go on,' but you do not let me know who it is you will send with me. Yet you yourself have said, 'I know you by name and you have won my

favor.' If indeed I have won your favor, please show me your ways, so that I can understand you and win your favor." . . . Yahweh replied, "I myself will go with you, and I will give you rest." . . .

Moses said, "Show me your glory, I beg you." And he said, "I will let all my splendor pass in front of you, and I will pronounce before you the name Yahweh. I have compassion on whom I will, and I show pity to whom I please. You cannot see my face," he said, "for man cannot see me and live. . . . Here is a place beside me. You must stand on the rock, and when my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock and shield you with my hand while I pass by. Then I will take my hand away and you shall see the back of me; but my face is not to be seen" (Ex 33:18-33,JB).

Here the Old Testament narrates a momentous experience in the life of Moses. To strengthen him for his task, God gave him something much more precious than the stone tablets of the Law inscribed by God's own finger or the external manifestations of his power in thunder and lightning on Sinai. God granted him some kind of direct encounter, an immediate communication with God's own personality, a partial but real vision of God himself. Jesus' promise in the New Testament must be understood as being of the same nature. Jesus too promises much more than external aid; he speaks of revealing himself to the disciple. "Whoever accepts my commandments and obeys them is the one who loves me. . . . I too will love him and reveal myself to him" (Jn 14:21).

This interpretation of "I will reveal myself" is consistent with other uses of this expression in the fourth gospel. In John 7:1-8 we read of a conflict between Jesus and a group of his relatives. These latter found Jesus' behavior inconsistent. If he was the Messiah, as he claimed to be, why did he not appear more visibly on the public scene? Why did he not take a more active role in religious politics and strive to create an impression in leading circles at Jerusalem?

They told Jesus:

“Why don’t you leave this place and go to Judaea so that you can show the miracles you are doing to the people there who want to follow you? If a man wants to be known he does not do things in secret. Considering what you are doing, you should *reveal yourself* to the world” (Jn 7:2-4, author’s trans.).

Jesus had refused to take their advice and had stayed on in Galilee. At the Last Supper the apostles were apparently reminded of this incident when Jesus said that he would reveal himself to any person who would keep his words. We read that Judas, the Canaan, asked, “Lord, how can it be that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?” (Jn 14:22). Jesus’ reply is tantamount to: I will not exclude anyone if only that person is ready to accept my words and so express his love for me (Jn 14:23). What we should note here is that both the apostles and Jesus himself see a clear parallel between becoming known to a wider public and the self-revelation which Jesus promises to the individual disciple. In other words, the kind of revelation that Jesus is speaking of when he says he will reveal himself is a manifestation that forces itself on the consciousness of the disciple concerned. There can be no question of Jesus secretly taking up his dwelling within the disciple’s heart without the latter being able to detect it.

We Shall Make Our Dwelling Place With Him

The tangible nature of Jesus’ presence in the believer can also be deduced from the way Jesus describes it as an *indwelling*:

“If anyone loves me,
he will keep my word.
Then my Father will love him,
and we shall come to him
and make our dwelling place with him” (Jn 14:23, AB).

The Father and the Son will reside in the disciple. They will make him, as it were, their home, their palace, their temple. Could there be a question here of an indwelling that is true on the supernatural plane, but invisible to the recipient? Biblical evidence rules out such an interpretation.

God making his dwelling among human beings is a frequent theme in scripture. The theme is elaborated in a song on the Old Testament Law (Sir 24); it is applied to the Incarnation (Jn 1:13), and to the vision of heaven (Rv 21:3). But the main scriptural reality of God's dwelling with his people was Yahweh's presence in the Temple. It is described in the following terms:

Then the cloud covered the Tent and the dazzling light of the LORD'S presence filled it. . . . They could see the cloud of the LORD'S presence over the Tent during the day and a fire burning above it during the night (Ex 40:34,38).

[At the dedication] the Temple was suddenly filled with a cloud shining with the dazzling light of the LORD'S presence. . . . Then Solomon prayed:

“. . . you have chosen to live in clouds and darkness.

Now I have built a majestic Temple for you, a place for you to live in forever.” . . .

“But can you, O God, really live on earth? Not even all of heaven is large enough to hold you, so how can this Temple that I have built be large enough?” (1 Kgs 8:10-13,27).

What should strike us is that, for the pious Jew, God's indwelling was a visible reality: His presence radiated from the Temple. “How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord, God of hosts. . . . One day within your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere” (Ps 84:1,10,GP). Although God himself was invisible, his presence could be “seen” as a radiation of glory.

God, though invisible, was thought to be enthroned upon the cherubim that stood on top of the Ark of the Covenant (1 Kgs 6:23-28; 2 Kgs 19:15).

Wherever the Ark of the Covenant moved, there God made his presence felt. It was the Ark of Yahweh that made all Israel shout at Aphek "so that the earth resounded" (1 Sm 4:5,JB); that threw down the statue of Dagon (1 Sm 5:1-4); that struck the Philistines with tumors (1 Sm 5:6-12); that killed Uzzah for touching the lid with his hand (2 Sm 6:7); and that brought prosperity to the family of Obed Edom by its mere presence (2 Sm 6:12). God's dwelling with man was a powerful dwelling with tangible results: "The Lord is King; the peoples tremble. He is throned on the cherubim; the earth quakes. The Lord is great in Sion" (Ps 99:1,GP).

So when Jesus says, "We shall come to him and make our dwelling place with him," we have to understand it in the light of this Old Testament power and radiation of glory. We could not possibly imagine these divine guests entering our home without our noticing the difference. Their taking told of a person, their living in a person, cannot mean anything else but that they make their loving presence felt in a very profound and lasting way.

In post-scholastic theology there was a lot of discussion on the exact nature of the indwelling. With their characteristic "ontological" interest, the post-scholastics saw in it a new form of *being*. The indwelling of the Blessed Trinity was seen by them as a kind of new, special, physical superpresence, added over and above God's presence as Creator. This superpresence, however, was real on its own account; it made not the slightest difference whether it was noticed by the recipient or not. The indwelling was thought to be just as real in a baptized, newborn child as in a baptized adult.

Many centuries before, St. Thomas Aquinas had offered another interpretation that seems much closer to the biblical sources. For Thomas, the indwelling of God in the believer consists rather in a raised consciousness of mutual knowledge and love. To quote St. Thomas:

God is present in another and more specific way [different from his presence as Creator] in a rational creature who knows and loves him at a particular moment or who does so habitually. And because a rational creature can only know and love by grace, God is said in this particular manner to be present in the saints by grace.⁶

Since a rational creature through his own activity reaches God himself by knowing him and loving him, God is said according to this special way of presence not only to be in the rational creature, but even to dwell in him, as in his Temple.⁷

Mutual knowledge and love unite Jesus and his disciple. This seems to do justice to Jesus' own words:

"If anyone loves me,
he will keep my word.
Then my Father will love him,
and we shall come to him
and make our dwelling place with him" (Jn 14:23,AB).

The Father and Jesus will make their presence felt in the disciple in such a way that the disciple will feel he or she knows them better and loves them more intensely. The two verses, "I too will love him and reveal myself to him" (verse 21) and "my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our dwelling place with him" (verse 23) are therefore completely parallel in meaning.

Other expressions used by Jesus confirm that he is promising a tangible experience. How could Jesus say he would not leave us as orphans (Jn 14:18,JB) if his presence with us were only to be believed, not experienced? How could Jesus say, "You will see me" (Jn 14:19), unless he referred to some real perception, some recognition of his own personality? This is further confirmed because Jesus contrasts the believer's experience with the world's inability to see him. If the believer depended exclusively on intellectual knowledge derived from faith, what real ad-

vantage would he or she have over the unbeliever as far as "seeing" the Lord is concerned?

All these considerations inexorably point to the same conclusion: Jesus promised his future disciples a direct experience of himself. His words at the Last Supper may be paraphrased in this way: "Although my body will ascend to heaven, I will remain present to you. You will know me, you will recognize me. In a way unintelligible to those who lack faith, you will have a direct perception of me by which you will know that we share the same life. If you remain close to me and prove your love by living my gospel, I too will show my love in a tangible manner and will make myself known to you. My Father, the Holy Spirit and I will be with you all the time, living in you, making you feel the embrace of our love."

The One Condition

In his reply to Judas, Jesus stated that he would be prepared to reveal himself to his disciples (Jn 14:23). But he repeated the same condition he had put before, namely, that such a disciple would have to keep his commandments (cf. Jn 14:21). It is as if Jesus told us in plain English: "You will experience my presence only if you. . . ." Understanding what condition he is demanding is obviously of the greatest importance. We could raise a number of questions about it: Does Jesus always require the same condition? What exactly does this condition consist in? What does it require from us? Is it possible for us today to fulfill this condition?

Studying the New Testament writings, we find five passages, in which the promise of the experience of God is linked to a condition. All five texts are Johannine and so reflect St. John's theology. It is rewarding to compare them (all texts are from AB, italics added).

- Jn 14:15-17* "If you love me
and *keep my commandments*, then at my re-
quest
the Father will give you another Paraclete
to be with you forever.
He is the Spirit of Truth
whom the world cannot accept
since it neither sees nor recognizes him;
but you do recognize him
since he remains with you and is within
you."
- Jn 14:21* "Whoever *keeps the commandments* that he
has from me
is the man who loves me;
and the man who loves me will be loved by
my Father,
and I shall love him
and reveal myself to him."
- Jn 14:23-24* "If anyone loves me
he will keep my word.
Then my Father will love him,
and we shall come to him
and make our dwelling place with him.
Whoever does not love me *does not keep my
words*."
- 1 Jn 3:24* *Whoever keeps his [Jesus'] commandments*
lives in God and God lives in him.
We know that he lives in us
by the Spirit that he has given us.
- 1 Jn 2:3-4* We can be sure that we know God
only by *keeping his commandments*.
Anyone who says, "I know him,"
and *does not keep his commandments*,
is a liar, refusing to admit the truth.

In all these texts we find the promise that we shall have a direct and intimate knowledge of the Blessed Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There may be slight differences in the way we experience the action

of these Divine Persons (about which I will speak in later chapters), but fundamentally it remains one experience of the Divine. In fact, we could not possibly be aware of Jesus without remembering his relationship to the Father and participating in the Spirit whom he gives us. In all five texts the same condition is repeated: We should keep Jesus' commandments (alternative formulation: keep his word). This repetition, especially in the writings of an author like St. John who prefers synonyms and parallel formulations whenever possible, shows that we have to take it as a rather specific and exclusive condition. Jesus did not say: "If you are baptized. . . ."; "If you believe"; "If you follow me"; "If you pray regularly" His words were precise: "If you keep my commandments. . . ." The exclusive nature of this condition may also be seen in the affirmation of the opposite: Those who do not keep Jesus' commandments, do not participate in the revelation of love (Jn 14:24; 1 Jn 2:4). We can experience the Blessed Trinity in this special way *only* if we keep Jesus' words.

Fidelity to the Law?

What did Jesus mean by "keep my commandments"? Perhaps the condition strikes us as an anticlimax. Perhaps it deflates our enthusiasm by its apparent simplicity. This is because "keeping the commandments" evokes in us the picture of the law-abiding religious zealot who worries all day about loyal obedience to external rules. But, surely, this kind of legal obedience, this fidelity to the law, could never have been held out by Jesus as the supreme virtue, much less as the condition for a living and dynamic experience of God!

Jesus knew the legalism of the scribes and the Pharisees only too well. Jesus and the disciples were frequently accused by them of not observing the com-

mandments conscientiously; of profaning the sabbath by picking corn from a field, by curing the sick or allowing a man to carry his mattress; of not following the ritual prescriptions for the washing of hands; of not fasting on traditional days; and the like. Jesus utterly rejected such an attitude toward the commandments. He called the Pharisees blind guides and hypocrites. He ridiculed their practice as "straining out gnats and swallowing camels!" (Mt 23:24,JB). He stated bluntly that prostitutes had a better chance of entering the kingdom of heaven than they (Mt 21:31) and declared the humble sinner a greater friend of God than the law-abiding, but proud, Pharisee (Lk 18:14). The last thing Jesus would want to do is to present the scrupulous observance of rules and prescriptions as the ideal he had in mind. Blind obedience, loyalty to the letter of the law, rigorous observance, the discipline of soldiers and moralists, may occasionally have raised their head even in forms of Christian spirituality: They were always far from the mind of Jesus.

Jesus' Own Commandment

To understand what Jesus means by "keep my commandments" we should stress the *my*. Jesus admitted the validity of the Ten Commandments and the basic requirements of the Old Testament Law. He did not reject them, but repeatedly stated that they were presupposed in his kingdom. "Do not think that I have come to do away with the Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets" (Mt 5:17). "Keep the commandments if you want to enter life" (Mt 19:17). "You neglect to obey the really important teachings of the Law, such as justice and mercy and honesty. These you should practice, without neglecting the others" (Mt 23:23). On each of these occasions Jesus mentions fidelity to the laws in passing, as a first step. Never does he make it the central burden of his message.

When Jesus speaks of "my commandments," he means requirements that go beyond natural virtue or Old Testament Law. This is his main theme in the Sermon on the Mount. "Eye for eye and tooth for tooth," reward or punishment according to strict merits, is a generally accepted principle of morality. But Jesus requires more. He wants us to be magnanimous even if we are treated unjustly: by offering the other cheek, by giving our inner garment too, by carrying a burden an extra mile. He wants us not just to avoid murder, but even angry thoughts. He wants us to love not only our friends, but even those who make life difficult for us. He opposes what was said to "the men of old" (the Ten Commandments) to "I say this to you" (his own commandment). It is as if he says (Mt 5:21-48; Lk 6:27-38): "I want you to give more than people can demand from you in terms of strict justice. I want you to be kind even in your thoughts. You should be generous. You must overcome evil by good. Do not take revenge. Wish well even to your opponents. Be helpful to everyone. Love all people whatever their disposition toward you may be."

Jesus' commandments amount not to a list of rules, but to a new attitude, actually to one commandment. And this new attitude can be summed up in terms of love, the kind of love that Jesus himself exemplified. This is stated explicitly in the writings of St. John.

"I am giving you a new commandment:
Love one another.
As I have loved you,
so you too must love one another" (Jn 13:34,AB).

"This is my commandment:
Love one another
as I have loved you. . . .
This I command you:
Love one another" (Jn 15:12,17,AB).

This is the commandment that he has given us,
that anyone who loves God must also love his brother
(1 Jn 4:21, AB).

Jesus' commandment demands a love of our
neighbor that springs from God; that is merciful,
generous and life-giving as God's love is. It demands
that we be ready to lay down our lives for it (Jn 15:13).
It requires that we live the kind of life Jesus lived.

We can be sure
that we are in God
only when the one who claims to be living in him
is living the same kind of life as Christ lived (1 Jn
2:5-6,JB).

We started this chapter by asking the question
whether we can know God directly and personally. The
answer is yes! Jesus himself assured us that we can.
His promise might be freely rendered in this way: "If
any one of you really loves me and proves this love by
living the kind of life I lived, I in turn will give tangible
proof of my love. I will make you experience my
presence."