5th Sunday of Easter, 5/15/22—5:00 PM, 7:30 and 9:30 AM

Back on Sunday, April 24, Orthodox Christians throughout the world celebrated Orthodox Easter. Commenting that it was Orthodox Easter that day, the CBS Evening News broadcast a scene showing President Vladimir Putin of Russia standing in the Orthodox Cathedral in Moscow making that Eastern sign of the cross where you go from your right shoulder to your left. When I saw that, knowing how he had initiated and had been leading that horrible war in Ukraine, I felt like pointing my finger at him and yelling, “You, fraud! You, fraud!” until I remembered how one of my sisters years before had pointed out at dinner one night something that she’d learned in grade school that day: that every time we point an accusing finger at another person, we have to remember that there are three other fingers point the same thing back at us.

In one of his revivals years and years ago, the late famed evangelist Dr. Billy Graham once asked the question, **“*If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?” (repeat)*** Indeed, very powerful words. But what does it mean to be a Christian?

Here in today’s Gospel answers that question when he tells his apostles, ***“I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*** Again, as Billy Graham asked those many years ago, **“*If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?,”*** what evidence would there be to convict us as being a Christian when so often we don’t love one another? While I am sure that none of us has started a land war like Vladimir Putin did, haven’t we often fanned the flames of war by our spreading gossip or by being overly critical of other people? While I am sure that none of us has bombed buildings as Vladimir Putin has done, haven’t we often bombed other people by our outbursts of anger and lack of patience? While we can be very tempted to point the finger of blame at Vladimir Putin, we have to remember those other three fingers pointing the same thing back at us. If there is to ever be a world in which there is no war, if there is to ever be a world in which there is love and peace, it has to start with you and me as followers of Christ.

I don’t know if you noticed our electric sign before you came into Church today, but there is a most powerful saying that it is trumpeting which goes like this, ***“Be who God meant you to be, and you will set the world on fire.”*** This saying comes from the lips of St. Catherine of Siena, a woman, a mystic, a third order Dominican who lived in the middle of the fourteenth century. We can set the world on fire if we heed Jesus’ words to us today, ***“I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*** And again, ***“As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.”*** The big question for us all is how much do we really treasure how much our God has loved us? And how can we love one another unless we are constantly growing in our awareness of how much our God is loving us right now?

Again, St. Catherine of Siena tells us, ***“Be who God meant you to be, and you will set the world on fire.”*** Again Jesus tells us exactly who God meant us to be when he says, ***“As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.”*** But again Billy Graham asks us, **“*If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?”*** My brothers and sisters, may we be who God meant us to be, loving each other as Jesus has loved us, and we will indeed set the world on fire.