

6th Sunday of Easter

Theme: "THIS IS MY COMMANDMENT: LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I LOVE YOU"

Today, we are blessed that two of our parishioners, Anaiah Garcia and Robert Howard, will be receiving First Holy Communion during this Eucharistic celebration. We extend our heartfelt congratulations and God's blessings to Anaiah and Robert on their reception of the Holy Communion. I'm very grateful to their families for their assistance. Big thanks to Sandy Kraynok, the First Holy Communion Class teacher, Doris Sandreth, the DRE, and our entire Parish School of Religion team. God's blessing to you all!

Holy Communion, as our Roman Catholic Church faith teaches us, is the Real Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The Catechism of the Catholic Church puts it so beautifully: "By the consecration the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is brought about. Under the consecrated species of bread and wine, Christ himself, living and glorious, is present in a true, real, and substantial manner: his Body and his Blood, with his soul and his divinity" (#1413, cf. Council of Trent: DS 1640; 1651). We are not worthy to receive Jesus Christ in Holy Communion except by his love and mercy. Jesus Christ continues to nourish us when we receive him in the Holy Eucharist. Just imagine not eating the whole day--how do you feel? Personally, my energy level drops. So by not receiving Jesus Christ in Words and the Sacrament, we are 'starving' our soul. Just as we eat food for our body nourishment, we need Jesus Christ to nourish our souls also.

In the Gospel of St. John we read on this 6th Sunday of Easter, he reminds us of Jesus' commandment: "THIS IS MY COMMANDMENT: LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I LOVE YOU."

The kind of love Jesus is commanding us to have for one another is more than feeling. It is love in action. This love is what St. Paul calls Agape love (1 Cor 13). As St. Paul tells the Corinthians, this Agape love is more superior/important than faith and hope and it never fails. It is not an Eros, meaning a romantic or sexual love. Erotic love is based on feeling. You are loved because of your beauty, etc. Agape love is mainly concerned for the welfare of the other person, not for oneself. An Agape love is love that is based on unconditional love. God gave us Jesus Christ as his greatest love for humanity. That is truly an Agape love. We do not love God first. Rather, he loves us first, without any conditions. Jesus also came and taught us a true love: "NO ONE HAS GREATER LOVE THAN THIS, TO LAY DOWN ONE'S LIFE FOR ONE'S FRIENDS." This explains what he meant: "AS THE FATHER LOVES ME SO I ALSO LOVE YOU." It is this unconditional love that Jesus commanded his disciples and his future disciples to live and also die for.

This true love comes from God because God is love, as we hear in the second reading. St. John draws our attention to God as the origin/source of agape love. If we love one another as God loves us, then we are begotten by God and then we know God. In other words, we can't say we love God when we hate our brothers and sisters. Van Gogh put it so well: "The best way to know God is to love many things. Love a friend, a wife, something, and you will be on the right way to knowing about God."

In the first reading, we see God's love in action when Cornelius and his household, the first Gentiles, non-Jewish people, to become Christians and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. St. Luke wants the early Christian community and all of us to know that God's salvation is offered to all who are open to him. Peter himself admitted this fundamental truth: "IN TRUTH, I SEE THAT GOD SHOWS NO PARTIALITY. RATHER, IN EVERY NATION WHOEVER FEARS HIM AND ACTS UPRIGHTLY IS ACCEPTABLE TO HIM."

Yes, Jesus loves us all and commanded us to love one another, just as he and his heavenly father loves one another. As we all know well, you can't give what you do not have. In other words, we must first learn to love before we will be able to extend that love to one another. I believe this: the world will know we are truly Christians by words and deeds. Karl Barth, a renowned Swiss theologian, was asked by one of his friends what is the most profound theological truth he has ever thought of. After a brief moment of reflection, he replied: "JESUS LOVES ME, THIS I KNOW, FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO."

Fellow parishioners, during May, the Month of the Holy Rosary, please let us ask our Holy Mother Mary and her beloved husband, St. Joseph, to intercede for our world that needs true Christian love. God is love, and since he created us in his own image and likeness, we must also love one another just he loves us. Hatred, envy, wrath, malice, etc. all come from the evil one, Satan, and not from God.