

Homily – 6th Sunday of Easter

In the Gospel reading of today, we hear Jesus saying to us “Love one another as I love you...” (John 15:12). We have been hearing this commandment time and time again. The gospel call is to loving like Jesus did. Jesus clearly paints a picture of what true love is by giving us instances of God’s love for us in four ways.

First that he came to lay down his life for us and there could be no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends.

Second, he has given us the freedom and opportunity to become his friends, friends of God only if we do what he commands us. He calls us friends instead of servants because he has made known to us everything he learned from the Father.

Third, God manifested this love for us first by choosing us. The love existing between God and us is God’s own initiative. We did not choose Him to enjoy His love rather He chose us to enjoy His love.

Fourth, he commissioned us to go out and bear fruit, fruit that will last. That means He has given us every requirement for a successful life and the opportunity to receive whatever good we ask God in Christ’s name.

In the Gospel today there is a simple phrase which you could easily miss. Jesus says, “I call you friends,” because he says he has taught us everything about himself and about the Father. The Lord tells us that we are not his servants, but his friends and even children. We hear often that we are God’s Children, but I think we often forget what it means. Our friends are the ones who look out for us, do favours for us and stick with us. Real friends won’t let us off the hook either, even if we are out of line. They are the ones who will challenge us, because they love us. Jesus is telling us the same thing. He treats us as friends, which is a sign of his enormous respect for us. A servant can be let go at any time if they are not up to standard, but you don’t let go of a true friend. Even when they sometimes fall below standard, we keep accepting them. Jesus is telling us that this is the regard he has for us. I find that very comforting.

The matter of love as demanded by our Lord Jesus Christ is matter of action, not lip service. We have to show it concretely to both those who are deserving of our love and those who are underserving of it. How many of us can even give our life for our dearest friends? Can husband give his life for his wife? Can wife give her life for her husband? Not to even mention those we consider our enemies. But that is the demand of love. To love everybody as Christ loved us. But if it is hard for us to give authentic love to our dearests, how much difficult it would be to love even our enemies.

There is a silly joke that makes a powerful point about how it could be hard to give our life for our dearests. According to the story, Pope John Paul II was needing a heart transplant. There was much concern throughout the Roman Catholic world. Everyone gathered outside of the Vatican screaming and waving their hands. “Take my heart, Pope, take my heart!” Well, the Pope didn’t know what to do, so an idea popped into his head. He asked everyone to please be quiet for a few minutes and he told all of them that he was going to throw down a feather. Whoever the feather landed on, he would take their heart for the transplant. Pope John Paul II

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then threw the feather down upon the people. Everyone was still screaming and waving their hands, “Take my heart, Pope,” but with one difference: they were leaning their heads back and blowing the feather back into the air. “Take my heart, Pope (blow), Take my heart (blow).

So let our claim of love be genuine – for only then can we be God’s true Children.