

Homily for 6th Easter

Genuine love is an unselfish gift. It seeks the good of the beloved rather than its own benefit. God's love is an outreach of utter generosity; it comes before any response on our part. In Philosophy, philosophers, especially Aristotle, have explained that what makes a thing what it is, is the esse – the essence or inner nature of a being. As such, when a being does that which is proper to its essence, such being has lived its essence. To this point, God is known by His act of love for man. Our first reading is an account of how Cornelius and his family (though gentiles), received the Holy Spirit instantly. This as Peter described it shows that "God does not have any favourite." In other words, God's love is universal. All He wants us to do is to accept this love and come to him. Both the second reading and today's gospel from John reminds us of how much Christ himself loved us. They exhort us to remain in this love and of course to love one another sacrificially. So, as people created in the image of God, who is love, we must exhibit this love. From this fact, it becomes clear that the Christian's vocation is Love. In our contemporary time, love has become a household word such that every one of every faith and people of no faith talk of love. Nevertheless, how this love is lived and expressed is quite different. This has led to the different interpretations given to this phenomenal word. Jesus today teaches us the true meaning of love as seen in the gospel. The love of God for man is both creative and forgiving. It is a love that is kenotic that is, self-emptying or sacrificial. It finds its fullest expression in the kenosis of Jesus.

A young man got married and he asked his wife if they could go, as part of their honeymoon, to a certain country where his best friend lived as he wanted her to meet him. On meeting the friend he introduced him to his wife with the words. "Here is the man you need to thank for my being alive today". He is what I call a true friend. Apparently when they were in high school together the young married man found out that he had had a very severe kidney complaint, with both kidneys in a very serious condition. Even though he had been good friends always with the other young man, he realized then what it was to have a true friend. His friend, on hearing of his possible death due to his serious kidney condition offered him one of his own kidneys. Luckily the kidneys matched and the gift of the kidney saved his life. *I suppose not everyone would risk his own life to do this. Our love is never sacrificial. We are not ready to give up anything at all. It took the sacrificial love of Jesus as expressed on the cross for people to come back to God. This change will provide us with the strength, wisdom, courage, love and other resources that we need to deal with our problems. The heart is the root of the problem. God understands this and he goes for the root cause of our problem. He promised to take away our hearts of stone, and he did this by joining us to Christ's death. Christ's advice to be true friends.* A young man wrote this to his girlfriend. "Sweetheart, if this world was as hot as the Sahara Desert, I would crawl on my knees through the burning sand to come to you. If the world would be like the Atlantic Ocean, I would swim through shark-infested waters to come to you. I would fight the fiercest dragon to be by your side. I will see you on Thursday if it does not rain."

We can express our love in forgiveness and patience. Rather than focus on our own wants and desires, we can raise our eyes and see the needs of others. The love God calls us to is not an easy love. Sometimes it is very difficult to love some people. But remember, sometimes it is very difficult for others to love you, too. We love because God first loved us. We love because we are challenged to love and empowered to love by the Holy Spirit. We love because we know that love is the most powerful force in the world. Amen