

Scripture Study

Sixth Sunday of Easter – Cycle B



Opening prayer

Acts 10:25-26,34-35,44-48

(Psalm 98:1-4)

1 John 4:7-10

John 15:9-17

Overview of the Gospel:

- Continuing from last Sunday, the setting for this Sunday's Gospel is just after the Last Supper discourse in the upper room (John 13:1—14:31). Jesus has just spoken of himself as the vine and as his disciples as the branches, and the necessity for them to abide in him and be fruitful, or to risk being cut off.
- He now goes on to say that Christians are brought into the loving relationship of the Trinity (verses 9-11; 1 John 4:19). This involves a response of participation from us—and this participation should be marked by joy, the hallmark of the Christian life (Philippians 3:1; 4:4-7).
- Jesus delivers his new commandment of love, which he himself keeps perfectly (verses 12-14). We fulfill this commandment by pouring out our life for love of God, as Jesus did on the Cross. It is clear that joyful obedience, and not just faith, is required to be a “friend” of Jesus.
- Indeed, Jesus wants us to be his friends, rather than “slaves” (verse 15). Even though it is even a great honor to be slave of God (see Moses—Deuteronomy 34:5; Joshua—Josh 24:29; David—Psalm 89:20; Paul—Romans 1:1; James—James 1:1), to be God's friend is to have special access to him.
- Verse 15 makes clear we are specially chosen by Jesus for certain tasks: to “bear fruit that will remain”—fruits of holiness and apostolicity; and to persevere in prayer in Jesus name, especially as it applies to those fruits we are responsible to bear.

Questions:

- How is the promise of intimacy with Jesus conditional (verse 14)?
- Who was the first person to be called a “friend” of God (2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23)? What was the hallmark of this individual (Genesis 22:1-18)? What does it benefit us to be God's friend (CCC 142, 1972)?
- How does Jesus lay his life down for his friends? How does he want you to lay down yours? What does he say is the measure of our love for one another (verse 12; CCC 1825)? Does this love proceed from us as a source (John 15:4-5, 10)?
- What if we do not love our brother and lay down our life for others (1 John 3:16-17)? How can we show this love in practical ways (CCC 2447)?
- What does Jesus mean that we can ask and receive (verse 16; CCC 2745)? In whose name do we ask of the Father (verse 16; 16:23-24; Ephesians 2:18)?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 458-459, 609, 1823-1824, 1970, 1972, 2074, 2745

Closing prayer

“As two pieces of wax fused together make one, so he who receives Holy Communion is so united with Christ that Christ is in him and he is in Christ.” ~St. Cyril of Alexandria

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!

"I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you"

Scripture: *John 15:9-17*

Meditation: What is the greatest act of love – of self-giving for the sake of another? Jesus defines friendship, the mutual bond of trust and affection between two or more people, as the willingness to give totally of oneself even to the point of dying for one's friends. How is such love possible or even desirable? God made us in love for love. That is our reason for being, our purpose for living, and our goal in dying. God is love and everything he does flows from his love for us. He loved us so much, some might even mistakenly say too much, by giving us the best of all gifts, the offering of his beloved Son who gave his life as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. God gave up his Son so that we might become his sons and daughters, his adopted children (Romans 8:14-17).

Paul the Apostle tells us that we can abound in hope because *God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given us* (Romans 5:5). God's love has power to transform and change us so that we can be like him – merciful, kind, gracious, and forgiving. In God's love we find the fulness of grace, peace, life and joy. That is why Jesus came to give us abundant life through the gift and working of the Holy Spirit. Jesus gave his disciples a new commandment – a new way of loving and serving one another. Jesus' love was wholly directed toward the good of others. He love them for their sake and for their welfare. That is why he laid down his own life for us to free us from sin, death, fear, and everything that could hold us back from the love of God. We are to love others as Jesus has loved us. What is the essence of this new commandment? True love is sacrificial. It gives all to the beloved. It holds nothing back. It is wholly directed towards the good of another. There is no greater proof in love than the sacrifice of one's life for the sake



of another. Jesus proved his love for his disciples by giving his life for them, even to death on the cross. We prove our love for God and for one another when we embrace the way of the cross. What is the cross in my life? When my will crosses with God's will, then God's will must be done. Do you know the joy and contentment of a life fully surrendered to God and consumed with his love?

Jesus called his disciples his friends. Jesus not only showed his disciples that he cared for them. He enjoyed their company. He ate with them, shared everything he had with them – even his most intimate thoughts. And he spent himself doing good for them. To know Jesus is to know God and to understand the love and friendship God offers each one of us. One of the special marks of favor shown in the scriptures is to be called the friend of God. Abraham is called the *friend of God* (Isaiah 41:8). God speaks with Moses as a man speaks with his friend (Exodus 33:11). Jesus, the Lord and Master, in turn, calls the disciples his friends rather than his servants. What does it mean to be a friend of God? Friendship with God certainly entails a loving relationship which goes beyond mere duty and obedience. Jesus' discourse on friendship and brotherly

love echoes the words of Proverbs: *A friend loves at all times; and a brother is born for adversity* (Proverbs 17:17). The distinctive feature of Jesus' relationship with his disciples was his personal love for them. *He loved his own to the end* (John 13:1). His love was unconditional and wholly directed to the good of others. His love was also sacrificial. He gave the best he had and all that he had. He gave his very life for those he loved in order to secure for them everlasting life with the Father.

True love is costly. Those who truly love give the best they can offer and are willing to sacrifice everything they have for the beloved. God willingly paid the price for our redemption – the sacrifice of his only begotten Son. That's the nature of true friendship and love – the willingness to give all for the beloved. True friends will lay down their lives for each other. Jesus tells us that he is our friend and he loves us whole-heartedly and unconditionally. He wants us to love one another just as he loves us, whole-heartedly and without reserve. His love fills our hearts and transforms our minds and frees us to give ourselves in loving service to others. If we open our hearts to his love and obey his command to love our neighbor, then we will bear much fruit in our lives, fruit that will last for eternity. Do you wish to be fruitful and to abound in the love of God?

"Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve, to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labor and not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Prayer of Ignatius Loyola)

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