

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Father Jins' Homily

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

Ps 98:1-4

1 Jn 4:7-10

Jn 15:9-17

When Fr. Damien arrived in Molokai to assemble a prefabricated Church for the lepers, he spent the first few weeks sleeping out under the trees, because he was unable to cope with the stench in the hovels of the lepers. He certainly wouldn't dare preach to them about God's love for them, because, as they saw it, that would be offensive. But slowly he opened his heart to the grace of God which enabled him to see the suffering Jesus in them. In no time, he was washing them, bandaging them, and burying them. He came to love them, and, through him, they came to believe that God loved them. He smoked a pipe to counteract the stench, but he soon was passing the pipe around for others to have a smoke. He ate food with them from a common bowl, out of which they scooped the food with hands that had no fingers. He caught the disease himself, and he was happy to be able to live and to die for them. — Thus, St. Damien followed Jesus' commandment of love given in today's Gospel: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Today's Scripture passages declare the profound truth that those who believe in Christ are to obey his commandment of love – "Love one another as I have loved you."

In the first reading, Peter teaches us that God shows no partiality in His love and that there are no boundaries to abiding in love. God loves everyone, both the Jews and the Gentiles, and He wants everyone to be saved through His son, Jesus. That is why God welcomed the Roman centurion Cornelius as the first non-Jew to become a Christian. The reading tells us how God also allowed the Gentiles who heard Peter's speech to receive the same Holy Spirit and His gifts that Peter's Jewish audience had received on the day of Pentecost. Today's Responsorial

Psalm (Ps 98) also directs our attention toward God's marvelous love and kindness in offering salvation to the whole world. In the second reading, John defines God as love and explains that He expressed His love for mankind by sending His son to die for us humans "as expiation for our sins." This Divine love gives us the command, and so the duty, to love one another as we have been loved by God. Since God has loved us first, we can and should love God in return, love ourselves properly, and love one another. After telling the parable of the vine and branches, Jesus, in today's Gospel, teaches the disciples that are to obey His commandment of love just as Jesus has obeyed His Heavenly Father's will by fulfilling His commandments and remaining inseparably bonded with His Father. Jesus' unconditional, forgiving, selfless, sacrificial love for us must be the criterion of our love for others. The highest expression of this love is our willingness to lay down our lives as Jesus did, for people who don't deserve it. The goal and result of our abiding in love, in God, will be perfect joy. Jesus no longer calls us slaves but now calls us "friends." He tells us that he has chosen us, and that, if we use Jesus' name, we can ask the Father for anything.

Let us cultivate an abiding and loving friendship with Jesus: a) The qualities we normally expect from our friends are trust, mutuality, faithfulness, equality, forgiveness, joy, and sacrifice. Jesus offers us all these qualities in our friendship with Him. b) As a friend, Jesus has trusted us by sharing with us everything that He has heard from his Father. Hence, we have to trust Him as a friend by listening to Him through the Bible and talking to him by prayer. c) As our friend, Jesus will be always faithful to us. Let us return this fidelity by being faithful to Him in doing His will. d) By calling us His friends, Jesus makes us equal to Him. Let us be proud of this and lead lives worthy of our unique status. e) As an understanding friend, Jesus is ready to forgive us time and time again. Let us also forgive those who offend us. f) As a friend, Christ has told us everything so that our joy might be complete in him. Let us enjoy Jesus' Divine friendship. g) Jesus declared that there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for a friend. He has done it for us. Hence, let us also love others sacrificially.

Jesus demonstrated the love God, his Father, has for us by living for us and dying for us. Hence, as His disciples, we are to be people for others, sacrificing our time, talents, and lives for others. This is what parents spontaneously do for their children by sacrificing themselves, their time, talents, health, and wealth for them. That is, they “spend” themselves for their children. The most effective way of communicating God’s love to others is by treating everyone as a friend, giving each the respect he or she deserves as a human being, God’s creation. In moments of trial and stress, when people are hostile or ungrateful and we feel the pull of bitter resentment in our hearts, it is important for us to remember that Christ’s love was not limited to the people He liked. Hence, we should close our minds to thoughts of revenge.