

Thoughts from Liturgy readings for 6th Sunday of Easter

What's Love Got to Do With It?

The first reading is from Acts 10: 44-48. Peter visits the home of Cornelius to bring God's Word. On entering the home, Peter reminds Cornelius how he is breaking Jewish law and tradition to visit with him. Then why did Peter do it and why did he bring a group along with him as witnesses to this crime?

Peter had a vision. In the vision, God showed Peter that no person is "common or unclean". In asking Peter to go to Cornelius and his group, God reminded Peter that God's Word is for all people. So Peter obeyed God, went to Cornelius and testified about Jesus. The Holy Spirit descended upon the group and Peter looked at the Jews he brought with him and asked, "...can anyone withhold water to baptize these people...?" These people that we all had looked upon as unclean and detestable...

What about us? Are there any people we look upon as unclean or detestable, unworthy to receive God's Word? Are there any traditions or barriers holding us back from testifying by word and action about Jesus? Are we doing all we can to get God's Word out to ALL?

The next two assigned readings, 1 John 5: 1-6 and John 15: 9-17 contain simple yet complex passages revealing the Love God has for all His people and the love He commands us all to have. In last week's readings, John defined God as love and said that all love comes from God. Now Jesus commands us, "love one another as I have loved you."

Let's look at examples of how Jesus loves us. He put aside His divinity and became man, left His Father and was born to us, lived with us, taught us, befriended us, healed us, ate with us, warned us, cried over us, prayed for us and even died a horrible death for us, one in which He felt completely forsaken by His own Father. He gave of everything, including Himself out of love for us. His was a love that the Greeks called Agape love, a selfless love freely given.

Over and over, He commanded this same love from us for one another. Is this selfless, freely given love even possible for us? Can we love one another as He has loved us? On our own the answer is a resounding NO. However, in Roman's 5:5 we read: "God's love is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us". In Galatians 5 love is listed as a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Jesus has compared our relationship with Him as vine to branches. He tells us that attached to Him is how we can bear these fruit. So the answer is YES. We can love one another as He loves us by staying attached to Him and letting the Spirit flow from vine to branches. We stay attached by prayer, study, reading, meditation, worship, community interaction. When attached, the Spirit will pour into us and through us and we will bear fruit. When love for one another, obedience, service, worship, and community life fill us with joy and do not feel as a burden, then we will know that we are attached to Christ and filled with His Spirit.

Thank you Lord Jesus for showing us just how much we still need you and that we will always need you. Though we are not worthy, please continue to keep us attached to you. Continue to prune us with love. We love you, Lord, but not as we should. May your Holy Spirit pour your love into our hearts so we may then love you as you deserve and love one another as you have loved us.

