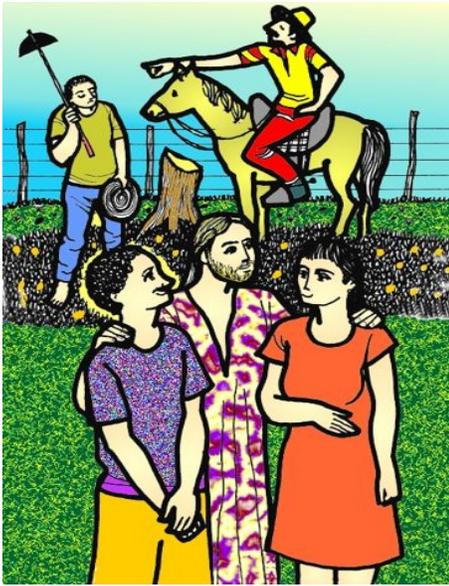


Lectionary Faith-Sharing Community
SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Cycle B - May 2, 2021



OPENING PRAYER

Guide: *I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people.*

All: **The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.**

Leader: All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation by our God.

All: **Sing joyfully to the Lord, all you lands, for his love is everlasting.**

Guide: *We invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit:*

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send, Lord your spirit and renew the face of the earth.

Oh God, that you have instructed the hearts of your faithful with the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us through the same spirit that always enjoy her divine consolation. By Christ, our Lord. Amen.

FIRST READING [Acts 10 (25-26), (34-35), (44-48)]

When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and, falling at his feet, paid him homage. Peter, however, raised him up, saying, "Get up. I myself am also a human being."

Then Peter proceeded to speak and said, "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him."

While Peter was still speaking these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the word. The circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit should have been poured out on the Gentiles also, for they could hear them speaking in tongues and glorifying God.

Then Peter responded, "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit even as we have?" He ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

In the early days of the Church, Christians had not yet grasped the intention of Jesus Christ that it be Catholic, that is, universal. Or what is the same, without restrictions of race, language, nationality, etc. All are invited to "get on the boat of Christ." If we read the verses prior to this text that is proclaimed as the first reading, we will find the details of Cornelius's conversion, and how God is in charge of opening their eyes, helping them to discover that salvation was not a matter of a "chosen race." (That is, the people of Israel) but of all humanity.

Peter assimilates this lesson, because he understands that it is God's work that the Roman centurion has been called to the Christian faith. In this way, the apostle understands that God does not distinguish between persons. But when Peter realizes that the Holy Spirit has decided to dwell in the soul of the centurion (and his companions), he surrenders to the evidence that a new Pentecost has occurred. Then Peter recognizes that baptism is also for pagans. The emotional impact on Peter is such that he even stays for several days sharing the joy of the Lord's arrival to those people, and in that coexistence, as expected in the home of some Gentiles, the Jewish standards of purity that mortified him initially were not taken into account.

(1) In exceptional cases God has communicated his Holy Spirit to some people before they were baptized, as happened with Paul and now with Cornelius. But all Christians have received it at the time of our baptism. Is it a different Holy Spirit than the one the apostles received at Pentecost?

(2) How do you understand the Holy Spirit? Is it a supreme, special being? Is it one of the ways God manifests Himself? When you refer to the Holy Spirit, do you keep in mind that you are referring to God and not to another "divinity"?

(3) How often are you willing to listen to the Holy Spirit? Are you silent to listen to his voice or is your prayer a continuous speaking that would not allow you to hear him? (Read Matthew 6:7)

(4) How can the Holy Spirit manifest in your life? How can he communicate his designs to you?

SECOND READING [1 John 4 (7-10)]

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love.

In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him.

In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins.

Saint John summarizes in these short lines "the spirit of the written word" of the entire New Testament. In these lines we discover the God that Jesus has revealed as Father: "God is love." But it does not stop at a simple proclamation of a phrase or 'slogan'. John raises the practical consequences that this truth has for all believers. It is not possible to believe in God if the most intense desire for him is not adopted, no one can claim to believe in God if he or she does not live loving. Whoever does not love has not known God, because God is love. And he who has known God cannot stop loving.

Our religion is not an extension of a religion of precepts like the Jewish one. We do not practice a faith that is sustained by a series of mandatory rules and rituals. Our religion is marked by the sign of love. Christian love is not a human effort to obey certain precepts, much less to be accepted by God. Our religion consists of a constant conversion, it is a continuous discovery of what the love of God, who has been the first to love, means. And that love of God has manifested itself in many ways, reaching the extreme that his only Son, made man, has given his life for love! to all mankind. Love is not an abstract idea, or "something you feel," but the manifestation of God in our lives.

As the text of this reading is closely related to the gospel, we will reflect on this text with the questions to be found in the gospel section, on the next page.

GOSPEL [John 15 (9-17)]

Jesus said to his disciples:

"As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love.

"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy might be complete.

This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing.

I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you.

This I command you: love one another."



Last week we read about the image proposed by Jesus Christ about the vine and the branches. This week's passage presents us with the practical application of that text.

The theme revolves around fraternal love, and the starting point is in the Father's love for the Son. The Son then responds with his decision to carry out the will of the Father. This relationship of two divine persons who love each other is translated through the human nature of Jesus Christ by the giving of his own life. Let's remember that last week we read what Christ says about it: "I give my life voluntarily, because I want to."

The apostles have been able to see and also feel that very special love of Jesus Christ. For this reason they can give special testimony of what he means by love. Helped by the Holy Spirit, they manage to organize their ideas

and begin to preach the new commandment of Jesus: we are all called to practice fraternal love and to spread it everywhere. The only model to imitate in order to perfect the practice of this way of loving is simply the love of Jesus Christ.

Between Jesus and believers there is no servile dependency relationship, a relationship of "I command and you obey", a relationship of "if you fulfill my precepts I will love you." In our relationship with Jesus Christ we can feel that there is rather a friendly relationship, full of trust and of course, love. But this relationship does not exist because we have decided to fall in love with God, since it has been He who has been in charge of conquering our hearts. It was He who took the initiative. It has been He who has chosen us to belong to his flock. A herd in which the unity of its members is due to the fact that love is practiced between all.

(1) Read Leviticus 19:18. Why do we call Jesus Christ's love of neighbor a "new commandment" if it had already been written for many centuries? (Hint: compare with what Jesus says in the first line of the second paragraph of the gospel, and see if there is something additional)

(2) Read John 13 (34-35). What does this text make you think? Share with the group

(3) What would we know about God if Jesus Christ had not existed?

(4) Jesus Christ manifested himself in various ways. How would you rank the following actions in degree of importance?
[Conversion of sinners] - [Healing of the sick] - [Compassion for the marginalized] - [Love of neighbor] - [Redemption]
[Communication of the Good News] - [Prayer] - [Love of God]

(5) Christ dares to call you "friend." Is it easy or difficult for you to relate to Jesus Christ as a friend? Share

(6) When Christ defines himself as our friend, he says that it is because he has made known to us what he has received from the Father. How do you understand this?

(7) When Christ defines himself as our friend, what does he expect in return?

(8) Share with the group any occasion when you felt the fraternal love of a friend.

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord of the day and night, of the beginning and of the end: At the closing of this meeting, once again we lift up our hearts to You, divine source of all life.*

All: **We thank you for the gifts you have bestowed on us. We thank you for the love expressed in companionship and understanding, mutual respect and shared ideas. We give you thanks for your holy power that will help us in our concerns that we have shared. For these and all the gifts that come from You, we give you thanks.**

Leader: *Lord hear our prayers* (attendees can propose their own needs of prayer)

All: **In the same way in which we have being blessed by your presence as we meet, we ask now to bless our safe return to our homes. May your holy blessing be over us + in the name of the Father ...**

Leader: *May the King of the eternal glory gather us together in His heavenly banquet. Amen.*