

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

MAY 17, 2020

MASS READINGS

MONDAY: ACTS 16:11-15, PS 149, JN 15:26-16:4A

TUESDAY: ACTS 16:22-34, PS 138, JN 16:5-11

WEDNESDAY: ACTS 17:15,22-18:1, PS 148, JN 16:12-15

THURSDAY: ACTS 18:1-8, PS 98, JN 16:16-20

FRIDAY: ACTS 18:9-18, PS 47, JN 16:20-23

SATURDAY: ACTS: 18:23-28, PS 47, JN 16:23B-28

NEXT SUNDAY: THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD – RDGS: ACTS 1:1-11, PS 47, EPH 1:17-23, MT 28:16-20

MASS INTENTIONS

MONDAY: BUD & BRIDGET FITZSIONS

TUESDAY: RAYMOND BROWN

WEDNESDAY: FERRITER FAMILY

THURSDAY: SI: MIKE ROBERTS FAMILY

FRIDAY: POOR SOULS

SATURDAY: BUD & BRIDGET FITZSIMONS

SUNDAY: FOR THE PARISH

MEMORIAL FLOWERS

Arthur Tyrrell family. Gerban, Lucille, Stephen & Theresa Brouwer. Marge, Ann & Mike Kirsch. Alicia Gonzalez. Candace Brown. William Nunnally. Darin Leak. Marian Schwartz. Ann Hubertz. Carl & Scott Waclawik. (Farrell & LaGuire family)

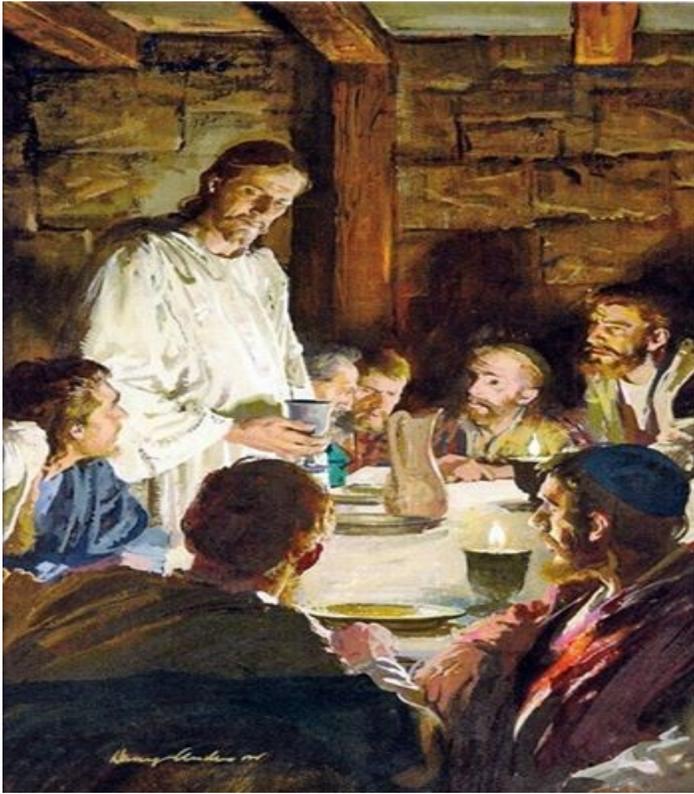
GOSPEL REFLECTION:

And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him."

When we consider the relationship described in the book of Genesis of man with God before the Fall we are likely to think of this idyllic, harmonious union in which man was fully aware of his own dignity as having been created in the image and likeness of God and ready and willing to live out that dignity within the beauty and blissfulness of Eden. But something went wrong. Man was not satisfied with this arrangement and through the abuse of his freedom sought to create a home for himself away from the God who made him out of love. With that sin, says St. Paul came death and everything which flows from it. Easter is not only the remedy of that situation but above and beyond the dignity we had from the beginning is the offer of eternal life and a share in the divine nature through Christ who took upon himself the sins of the world and in so doing, freed us from the slavery of sin and death and allowed us to be called "children" of God with the view that there "is more to come". In many of the baptismal homilies from the early Church we read of this new dignity and how we are to live that dignity through prayer, fasting and works of mercy. Prayer is that constant union with Father, Son and Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts through faith in which we are illumined by grace to see and experience the Divine Presence within and to carry that about as "temples of the Holy Spirit" aflame with that presence as "lights to the world" allowing our lights to shine thus giving our Heavenly Father glory, honor and praise. Through fasting we "organize" everything within our sphere of influence so that it serves our goal or end and that is life with God in the Kingdom. True citizens of heaven know the value of things of this world and how they relate to our end in life. Thus we use things wisely and never give them more power or authority than they deserve. Works of mercy flows from the Trinity dwelling within since "God is love and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him." Our actions betray our new found status as children of God since "by their fruits shall you know them". With all the gifts and benefits of "life with God" at our disposal we are indeed raised to a greater dignity than we had in the beginning and through the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ, the beneficent gift of the Holy Spirit we become the abodes of God himself to him be all glory and honor and praise forever and ever. AMEN

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Happy the man whose heart can rest,
Assured God's goodness ne'er will cease;
Each day, complete, with joy is blessed,
God keepeth him in perfect peace.
God keepeth him, and God is one,
One Life, forevermore the same,
One Truth unchanged while ages run;
Eternal Love 'Love's' holiest name.
Dwelling in Love that cannot change,
From anxious fear man finds release;
No more his homeless longings range,
God keepeth him in perfect peace.
In perfect peace, with tumult stilled,
Enhavened where no storms arise,
There man can work what God hath willed;
The joy of perfect work his prize.

***And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father,
and I will love him and reveal myself to him.***

1. Why love is important?

Let us begin by looking at why love is so important and the core through which obedience flows out.

a. The reason to love

Christian theology stresses the importance of love because God has revealed that he is love. 1 John 4:8 "Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love, v16 says "So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." Love is both what God is and what he has done; God always acts in love.

Love in the Bible is described as both personal (between persons) and also selfless (desiring the best for others). God has displayed His love for us His children by sending His Son to die on the cross.

Romans 5:8 "but God shows his love for us in that while we were yest sinners, Christ died for us."

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

John 4:10 "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

As stated earlier in John 14 this message of love and keeping the commandments of God has been re-iterated multiple times in this chapter and this brings out the force of the words spoken. This in itself demands serious attention from the reader. These words are spoken to those who hold his word closely in their hearts and live by them and them alone. The promise given is for all who are His and there is no room for the half-hearted here. This is the real test of whether we love him. Do we fully do what he says?

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We may sing and dance and shout praise to God, and all this is good, but means little by itself. The real test of love is by obedience and a desire to do what God wants. Love only has meaning when there is obedience associated to it. 1 John 2:3-4 says “And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,”

So loving God and being His true disciple is not only an outward profession but it is also the inner possession of a living and true faith as it says in Luke 11:28 “But he said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!””.

The reason we love Jesus Christ is because we have found something that is precious and valuable in him.

- b. What are the properties by which love is distinguished.
- Love must be SINCERE. Romans 12:9 says “let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.” We must possess a love that is genuine as it mentions in this verse. It is easy to have a hypocritical love, a love that wears a mask and one of empty professions. Let our love be sincere by loving God through obedience and loving our neighbors by acts of kindness and this is how we show that our love is sincere.
 - Let love be SUPREME. Often our love to any object rises according to its worth. Our love to God must be supreme – with all the heart. We are not to love God as we love our friends, or relatives, or children, but must love Him above all things. He will allow no rival to share with Him the throne of your heart’s affection. Not even any lawful affection must set above that which we give to God, much less the love of sin or to worldly things. Deuteronomy 6:5 says “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”
 - Love must be CONSTANT. It must always be a strong and fervent love. A love with all your “might”. A love deeply rooted in the heart. A love so involved with your thoughts and feelings as to overcome the power of sin and Satan that you always walk with your mind set on Christ.

2 Why is obedience important?

a. Obedience is a sign and test and proof of love

John 14:21 tells us that obedience is a sign and test of love. Whoever obeys the commandment of God is the one who loves God. This is the same message given in John 14:15 saying “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”, except that it is in reverse to what is said in John 14:21.

John 14:15 begins with the root and traces it upwards to its fruits. Love blossoming into obedience. Whereas our reading in John 14:21 does the reverse.

Here our Lord declares the possession of His commandments to be a sign of love to Him. The verse begins by saying “Whoever has my...”. Notice that there are 2 ways that you can “have”.

The first way you can have is to simply have the commandments in the Bible available for you. The words are there before your very eyes and you can see it as a law that you ought to obey.

The second way to have is to have His commandments, is in your heart. This is when His commandments are within your will, it becomes a power that shapes your will and your thoughts and your actions. Everything you do comes out of that which is in your very being. This is the kind of “having” that Christ regards as real and valid. Love possesses the knowledge of the loved ones will.

There are always two motives of keeping commandments. One simply because they are commanded and out of fear, works-based etc. and the other because of our love of Him that commands it. Notice, that one is “slavery” and the other is “liberty”. There is a sea of difference between the two.

1 John 4:18 says “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts our fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.”

Love implies attraction, and fear repulsion and that is why fear cannot exist in love. This is the principle of love in general. It must not be limited to God’s love for us, or our love to God, or our love to one another. Love and fear only coexist when love is not yet perfect. Perfect love will absolutely exclude fear as surely as perfect union excludes all separation. A love that is self-interested is the love that fears; pure and unselfish love has no fear.

Many people affirm their love for Jesus Christ, but is this a genuine and sincere love? What is the proof of this professed love? John 14:21 says “...he it is who loves me.” Notice here that Jesus is singling out that one person as the only true lover of God.

Let us not be misled of our love for Jesus. The following are just some ways in which we think we show our love for Christ, but is it really true love or are we misleading ourselves?

When we have strong, frequent feeling of sorrow or compassion for Christ as someone who was innocent and suffered a horrible death on the cross. This is an emotion and an element of love, but it is not love.

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When we have an intellectual and moral admiration of Christ, this is also not love. Many unbelievers also may have the same opinion of Jesus.

Maybe we strive to keep the commands and laws of God, for an outwardly appearance so that we may get praise from a worldly perspective, but this again is more of a self-love than a real love of Christ.

The Bible tells us the proof of love is when we are obedient to the following:

1 John 4:20 "If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother."

We can see the point stressed in this verse, that we may look religious outside, and we may talk religiously and speak the words, but all of this amounts to nothing if it does not produce practical deeds of love, not just empty talk. John actually calls this a lie.

Are you someone who sings to the Lord saying "I love you, Lord, and I lift my voice to worship you...", and at the same time you have bitterness in your heart towards others and forgiveness. Then what you are really singing is a lie. It is just mere words and nothing else. It is just a outwardly show not an inwardly transformation.

The proof is in, how you treat those whom you see and interact with. Your brothers and sisters in this world. The love that you show to them is the proof of whether you really delight in your invisible Father and cherish his promises.

Ultimately what is being said here is that if you really love God, with your words and in your heart then you will rest and delight in all that God is for you, in all his amazing promises, and you WILL love your brother. You will be so full of hope and joy and freedom that you will love to spread the good things of God to as many people as possible.

Since you cannot see God, there is no way to really know if you love God since he is not around to see. The only way to know whether your claim to love God is true, is in the way you relate to people you can see. If you don't love your brother or sister you can see, then there is open evidence that you cannot be telling the truth when you talk about the invisible workings of your heart toward an invisible God.

3. Christ is known only to the loving.

John 14:21 tells us that if when we obey His commandments, it shows our love for God and to those who do this, Christ will manifest himself to them.

Notice here that He is not talking about a mystical vision or appearance where we see Him physically, rather He reveals Himself to us by giving us deeper insight into knowing God through His word. Jesus is saying here that when we obey Him, then He will share more of Himself with us. Again this isn't a mystical, extra-biblical knowledge, rather the knowledge of Him through His Word.

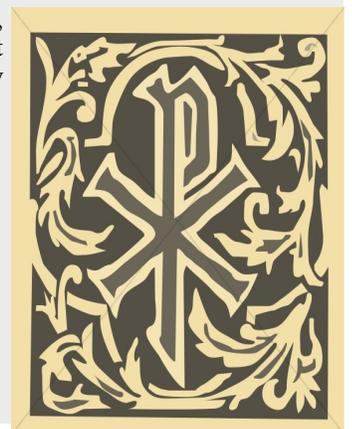
Jesus as we read in the beginning of John 14, Jesus spoke these words to comfort the disciples in their time of trouble, likewise a deeper revelation of Christ through the Scriptures will comfort us in our trials.

Through Jesus' answer you could also see that God will reveal Himself to the world through those who obey Him. As people see Christ in us, many will be drawn to our Savior. Matthew 5:16 says "...Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." The matter of the fact is that our lives may be the only Bible that many people read. If we joyfully obey Christ and enjoy His abiding presence, we will be His channel for revealing Himself to this disobedient world.

How beautiful are the words and character of Christ. He was the perfect example. He was obedient to the Father so as to the point of death that he was glorified above every other name.

Philippians 2:5-11 says

"5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."



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CHAPTER XI

Of seeking peace of mind and of spiritual progress

We may enjoy abundance of peace if we refrain from busying ourselves with the sayings and doings of others, and things which concern not ourselves. How can he abide long time in peace who occupieth himself with other men's matters, and with things without himself, and meanwhile payeth little or rare heed to the self within? Blessed are the single-hearted, for they shall have abundance of peace.

2. How came it to pass that many of the Saints were so perfect, so contemplative of Divine things? Because they steadfastly sought to mortify themselves from all worldly desires, and so were enabled to cling with their whole heart to God, and be free and at leisure for the thought of Him. We are too much occupied with our own affections, and too anxious about transitory things. Seldom, too, do we entirely conquer even a single fault, nor are we zealous for daily growth in grace. And so we remain lukewarm and unspiritual.

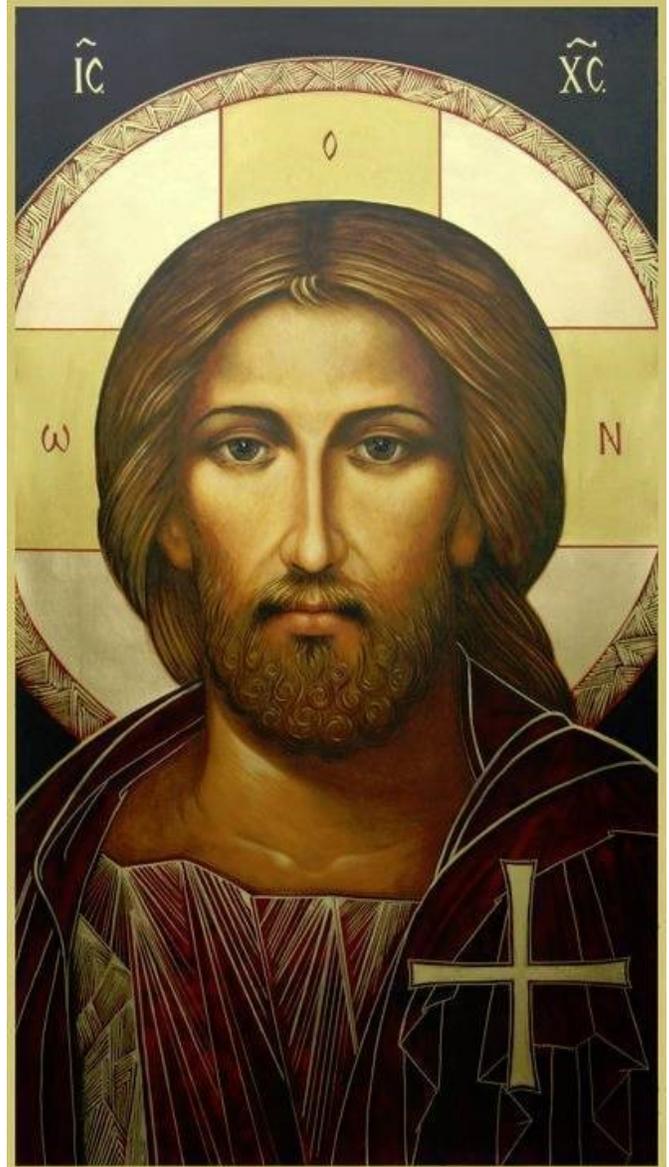
3. Were we fully watchful of ourselves, and not bound in spirit to outward things, then might we be wise unto salvation, and make progress in Divine contemplation. Our great and grievous stumbling-block is that, not being freed from our affections and desires, we strive not to enter into the perfect way of the Saints. And when even a little trouble befalleth us, too quickly are we cast down, and fly to the world to give us comfort.

4. If we would quit ourselves like men, and strive to stand firm in the battle, then should we see the Lord helping us from Heaven. For He Himself is alway ready to help those who strive and who trust in Him; yea, He provideth for us occasions of striving, to the end that we may win the victory. If we look upon our progress in religion as a progress only in outward observances and forms, our devoutness will soon come to an end. But let us lay the axe to the very root of our life, that, being cleansed from affections, we may possess our souls in peace.

5. If each year should see one fault rooted out from us, we should go quickly on to perfection. But on the contrary, we often feel that we were better and holier in the beginning of our conversion than after many years of profession. Zeal and progress ought to increase day by day; yet now it seemeth a great thing if one is able to retain some portion of his first ardour. If we would put some slight stress on ourselves at the beginning, then afterwards we should be able to do all things with ease and joy.

6. It is a hard thing to break through a habit, and a yet harder thing to go contrary to our own will. Yet if thou overcome not slight and easy obstacles, how shalt thou overcome greater ones? Withstand thy will at the beginning, and unlearn an evil habit, lest it lead thee little by little into worse difficulties. Oh, if thou knewest what peace to thyself thy holy life should bring to thyself, and what joy to others, methinketh thou wouldst be more zealous for spiritual profit.

Imitation of Christ by Thomas a Kempis



Holy Face of Jesus, Be my joy.
Holy Face of Jesus, Be my strength.
Holy Face of Jesus, Be my health.
Holy Face of Jesus, Be my courage.
Holy Face of Jesus, Be my wisdom.
Holy Face of Jesus, Image of the Father, Provide
for me.
Holy Face of Jesus, Mirror of Thy Priestly Heart,
Be my zeal.
Holy Face of Jesus, Gift of the Spirit, Show me
Thy love.
Holy Face of Jesus, saddened by sorrow, Grant my
requests through Thy merits.
Amen.