

## May 9, 2021

### Sixth Sunday of Easter

In my nearly 35 years of priesthood, this is the first time that I have been with my mother for a Mother's Day weekend Mass. Today is a very heartfelt day. I mention this not only because of this special moment, but also to point out the words in today's collect, the opening prayer of the Mass, "Grant, almighty God that we may celebrate with heartfelt devotion these days of joy . . . . "Heartfelt devotion" . . . "heartfelt devotion" the Latin, *affectu sedulo*, could also mean "with sincere feeling." God calls us to this celebration to both honor the risen Lord and to honor our mothers "with sincere feeling".

What does it to come to this celebration "with sincere feeling" or "heartfelt devotion"? It means that we come with our whole self, not with just our heads, not just with our souls, but also with our hearts. We come with hearts of love, we who made for love, by God who is love. We come with our hearts focused on what is above to avoid being bogged down by the things of earth. Hearts that want to remain in Jesus, to remain in his love, as Jesus remains with the Father in his Father's love. The sincere feeling of love knows that it is not first that we love God, but that he first has loved us. Our love becomes a sincere feeling when God actively purifies our feelings from our ego, everything that centers on ourselves, which is an insincere feeling of love; to realize that all comes from God, nothing, not even love, is of our making. All is a pure gift of God. Our sincere feeling, our heartfelt devotion is related to humility, which is also a gift from God.

We can see an example of true humility, of the sincere feeling of love, when Cornelius enters house where Peter was staying and Peter arrives, Cornelius drops to his feet. Peter says, "Get up, I myself am also a human being." If we read a little earlier in Acts, we see that both men had a vision while in prayer. Cornelius hears a holy messenger of God tells him to go and see a man named Peter, so he goes. Peter hears a message to eat food that Jews are forbidden to eat and he at first refuses until a voice tells him, "What God has purified, you are not to call unclean." We remember how the Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost, which we read about in Chapter two of Acts. Here in chapter 10 is another powerful manifestation of the Holy Spirit in one of the most significant passages in all of Acts where Peter's "sincere feelings" change when he finally understands what God was trying to say in the two visions when he says to all the people, "In truth, I

see that God shows no partiality. Rather in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him.” It might be hard to appreciate how significant this event was. However, if the small group of Jewish Christians had never experienced the power of the Holy Spirit falling upon the gentiles, we who are here at this Mass would very likely have never come to know Jesus as we do. It took the humility of Peter to admit that he was wrong for the Christian faith to spread from the Jews to the world beyond their nation. Humility, heartfelt devotion, sincere feeling is essential for the spread of the Gospel.

Archbishop Etienne in this year of the Eucharist calls for us to live actively what it means to be a priestly people, that is that all of us actively offer ourselves at the altar of God as the baptized, anointed as Christ was anointed as priest, prophet and king. The ordained priest leads us in the prayer and it is not just his prayer, it is the prayer of the entire Church. We live the Eucharist when we humbly bring our sincere feelings to the altar with the gifts of bread and wine as a priestly offering. Those feelings might be about things happening in the world, like in Colombia where the poor are rising up in protest over the oppressive taxes the government is imposing on them, or over the horrific experience of COVID 19 in India. It might be over something that we hear on the news about our own leaders that is disturbing to us. It might be challenges at school or work. It might be the joy of our students at St. Louise School who had yesterday in a very successful walk-a-thon in both sun and rain and despite the COVID restrictions or the great joy for our children who receive their first holy communion this month. It might be the joy of being with your mom, or maybe the pain of missing your mom. Whatever our experience is, we offer it with “sincere feeling” to the God who loves us first and who will transform our everyday experiences, who will divide our sorrows and who will double our joys. Offer your sincere feelings humbly to the Lord, and he will give the gift of love beyond your imagining in return.

