

Homily – Sixth Sunday in Easter  
May 26, 2019  
Year C John 14: 23-29  
----Father Michael Grant George Cadotte----

In my theological studies for my MDiv I have many times marveled at how the Church survived all the various controversies, struggles, debates, and outright fights over – well over everything it seems. Our first reading today is a reminder of this and a call to us now not to take what we have for granted.

The early Church struggled with identity issues. Our roots started as a break away sect of the Jewish faith and as the Church took seriously the call to make disciples of all nations more and more Gentiles (pagans) came to the Logos – the Word. This came to a boiling point, in very heated debate, over the male observances of Jewish law by Gentiles who were non-Jewish Christians.

Now it's important to remember one of the big Christological controversies of the early church was who Christ really was and that was settled at the first ecumenical council of Nicea in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. There the Church declared that Holy Trinity of Father, Son, and later added Holy Spirit. So it was that Spirit (fully God and Christ) that reached out to the church leaders in the first reading to set their hearts straight. I am sure the Spirit reminded them of Jesus' teachings on issue of law and observance to it and that is should not be a burden on the faithful. The point Jesus made when asked about performing work on the Sabbath was that it was a law that took away the opportunity for a family to work and earn income that was so needed in a Roman society heavily taxed to the point that the masses were constantly living on the brink of malnourishment. It's no wonder so many references to food, bounty, having one's fill are found in Scripture – it got very hungry people's attention. The point here is Jesus did not approve of rules, rubrics, and laws that placed undo burden on people when such laws did not bring them any closer to the salvation – to God.

God has, "...made no distinction between us (Gentiles) and them (Jews)...we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus..." (ACT 15:10-11). What we are seeing here is that God is not separating his chosen people, the Jewish people, from the pagan Gentiles. God's love and abundance applies to all of them as it applies to all of us today.

My dear friends, we are surrounded by issues, controversies, and hardships – in our lives and in the world we live. We struggle with who we should love, how we should treat others, and even larger issues such as who should be allowed to cross our borders, but friends,

When we gloss over the motivation of our moral choices by a blind response to a law, a regulation, or even a ritual, we miss the point. In effect we fail to love. Paul insists that the law can only condemn us. It adds nothing to our growth in the love of God. It is not even a minimum requirement. At best the law is a starting point for instruction and explanation of the love of God for us. (Keller, Volume2 Digest, Vol 62, Issue 4)

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Today's readings are meant for us to reflect on God's guiding love and comfort provided to us through the Holy Spirit. The Greek word used in John's original Gospel had two possible means: that of a legal nature (Counselor or Advocate) while the other possible meaning comes from those that stand by us to comfort us in times of woe (Comforter).

Think on that for a moment – the Holy Spirit is always there with us to counsel us when we need guidance, to advocate for us when we are weak and downtrodden, and to comfort us when despair, sadness, or illness bring us down. That is our loving God in action, but that action is a reciprocation of each of our actions is it not? We are called to love ourselves and all others as we love God as God loves us. It is this circle of love that feeds back on us, through God, that brings this inner peace we so much need in all our lives. It is not going to solve all your problems but gee-whiz, to have that inner peace to help us through such problems can make all the difference.

They say you a trip of a thousand miles beings with on single step and I say the problems of our world, and those in our personal lives, also start with single steps. Steps of faith in God and allowing the Holy Spirit to walk along with us and bring us Christ's peace. We just have to be open to is and look for it – God is always there but it's like air, it is all around us but we don't think about it until we call upon it with a deep breath.

And what we look for is often done in our actions as well. Brian Gleeson tells of a story of two children aged eight and six recounting a play they have put on at their local church. They have teamed up with a friend to dramatize how Jesus wants us to love one another. The first child gets a phone call from Jesus to say he will be coming along that day and will want some help. The two children are to keep a lookout for him. Well, Jesus turns up in the guise of the third child who has hurt her knee and is looking for some first aid. One of the first two reaches out to help and asks the second who is talking to Jesus on the phone to also help. She says she is too busy talking to Jesus and is still waiting for him to arrive. But in the end, she too goes to help the injured one. At the end of the day she receives another phone call from Jesus. He thanks her for helping him. She says she doesn't understand. She waited and waited for him, she points out, but he didn't turn up. Then Jesus explains that he did come after all, in the form of the child that needed help.

Love is reciprocal. The love we give is also the love we receive. And all of that love reflects back to God. So, despite the many troubles life may be presenting you personally, or even those in the greater world around us, take heart to know that our great Counselor is there along side us to comfort us. Know this and don't stop loving

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yourself and those around you for those very acts of love (even when you don't think they are warranted) are the very acts of love that will come back to you visa vie God. Thank you all for sharing your time with me today. Your time is an expression of your love and I am so moved by it and truly reflect it back upon you. And may all or loving thoughts and actions be pleasing to God and may God's love for each of us shine down upon all of us and give us peace.

AMEN