

6th Sunday of Easter – Year A

I'm not sure how many people still remember the musical "Fiddler on the Roof." But I grew up with it and, at one time, knew the words to many of the songs by heart. One of the songs that seems particularly appropriate in the context of today's readings is the song, "Do You Love Me?"

Tevya, the main character is confronted by the new reality that his daughters are not content to have a marriage arranged for them by their father. They want to marry for love, which appears to be a foreign concept for Tevya. It leaves him to ponder his own marriage, which had been arranged, and to end up asking his wife of 25 years, Golda, whether she loves him.

Golda lets him have it: "For 25 years I've fixed your meals, washed your clothes, darned your socks, etc." Golda's point is that her actions should give him all the indication he needs about whether she loves him. Still, Tevya would like to hear the words. Golda finished her part of the duet with "I suppose I do." That's enough for him, and he responds with "And I suppose I love you, too!"

In today's gospel we find Jesus engaging his disciples in a similar conversation. But rather than ask "Do you love me?" he challenges them with "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

Jesus explains that if a disciple loves Jesus and professes that love with words, then those words will be backed up by works of love.

So, what works of love are we talking about? A quick scan of the Gospels will provide a list of several items:

- To love one another as Jesus loved his own;
- To lead through service
- To serve others selflessly, even to the point of washing their feet, or it if comes to it, laying down their life for them;
- To cherish all others as brothers and sisters and children of the same God;

- To feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, heal the sick, visit the imprisoned, welcome the stranger
- To care for widows, orphans, aliens, and outcasts;
- To offer hospitality to strangers;
- To forgive as we have been forgiven;
- To daily embrace the cross which is the cost behind the “if” of discipleship.

I’ve heard many a confession where it’s clear that the person has used the 10 Commandments as their examination of conscience. Not that that’s bad, but if we were to use these commandments of Jesus, I for one would be confronted much more directly with how much I have failed to do.

The other two readings for today provide further examples of works of love which followers of Jesus are called to perform.

Philip answered Jesus’ “if-you-love-me” challenge by carrying the words and works of salvation to Samaria. This work of love required Philip to overcome the centuries-old animosity that had separated Jews from Samaritans in order to embrace them as brothers and sisters in the Lord and equal sharers in God’s saving gifts.

Works and words of love for Jesus required the recipients of Peter’s first letter to gently and respectfully respond to those who questioned their faith and lifestyle and to accept the suffering that is an inevitable part of belonging to Christ.

All that is not to say that God is waiting for us to act, to see if we love him before providing us with the grace of his love. God’s love has been poured out his Spirit upon us from the beginning, since the Spirit moved upon the waters at the creation of the world. God’s love is the motivating force enlivening all of creation.

Those to whom the Spirit comes live in love and obedience; those who live in love and obedience are persons in whom the Spirit dwells.

By the power and grace of the Spirit, the challenge of Jesus can be met and words of love can come alive in works of love.

As we move closer to the celebration of Pentecost, we pray "Come, Holy Spirit. Enkindle in us the fire of your love!"

General Intercessions

1. For Pope Francis, Archbishop Thompson, and for all the leaders in the Church: that the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, may be with them in their work of teaching and preaching the Gospel, we pray to the Lord.
2. That those who feel paralyzed or hampered in their work for peace and justice may be freed and given the power of the Risen One and His Holy Spirit, we pray to the Lord.
3. That each of us may always be willing and ready to share with others the reason for our hope, speaking gently and with reverence, and witnessing to Jesus by the power of a clear conscience in the sight of all, we pray to the Lord.
4. For all who are preparing for marriage, for ordination, First Communion or confirmation: that the Holy Spirit may fall on them with grace and blessing at the threshold of these great sacraments, we pray to the Lord.
5. For all who have asked us to pray for them, especially those who have been adversely affected by the corona virus pandemic, either in their health or economic circumstances, we pray to the Lord.
6. For all our departed loved ones who kept the commandments of Jesus on earth, that the Lord may now reveal Himself to them in the glory of heaven, we pray to the Lord.