

Fr. Curtis Miller     May 8-9, 2021

Homily for the Sixth Sunday of Easter

The early Church Father, St. Jerome, tells a story about St. John, the last surviving apostle, during his final years. Each Sunday, this frail, elderly apostle would be carried out for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, the Mass. The faithful would ask him to preach a sermon, to share with them one of Jesus' teachings. Yet each week, John would simply say, "Little children, love one another." Finally, someone asked one week, "Isn't there another teaching of Jesus that you could share with us?" The elderly apostle replied, "This is the truth that the Master always taught. If you do this, if you truly love one another, you do it all."

To truly love is to do it all, to fulfill all of Jesus' teachings and commandments. But it's hard to talk about love because we use that word a lot, to describe many different feelings. It means something different when we say we love pizza than when we say that we love our families. So what is love, in the Christian sense that Jesus uses it? It is a mature, total, self-sacrificial love. The Greeks use the word "*agape*" to describe this reality. Jesus Himself is the perfect example of this kind of love: He was willing to lay down His life on the cross for love of us. As Jesus said at the Last Supper, "There is no greater love than to lay down your life for your friends." At the same Last Supper, Jesus showed His love through humble service by washing His disciples' feet, setting us an example of humble love to imitate.

This weekend, we celebrate Mother's Day. What a wonderful opportunity to reflect upon the love of our mothers. (Now I know that not everyone had a good experience with their mothers; if that is the case for you, think of a woman who was a true mother to you, someone who loved you unconditionally). Our mothers have to put up with a lot. It's hard to be a mother, and there is a lot of heartache that comes with being a mother. And yet they still choose to love us, to take care of us, to share our joys, but also our burdens and sorrows. Let's be sure to do something to show gratitude to our mothers this weekend, and if they have passed away, let us offer our prayers for them with love.

When we think about other loves, like romantic love, we think of a love that is exciting. But while a more mature love, like the love of a couple who has been married for many years, isn't always as exciting, it is steadier and deeper. It is not the young love that says, "I think you're perfect, so I love you," but rather the mature love that says, "I know you're not perfect, but I still chose to love you anyway." That is real love, one strengthened by patience and mercy. It is the kind of love that God has for you and me. He loves us, in spite of our sinfulness. And it is His love that helps us repent and live better lives. Let us love each other in that way, helping each other to grow in virtue and holiness. Because as the Apostle John also said, "God is love."