



Homily for 5/9/2021

Very Rev. J. David Carter, JCL, JV

5th Sunday after Easter, Extraordinary Form
Mother's Day

Happy Mother's Day!

For many, this day makes us reflect on our childhood. More than likely it also reminds us of the wisdom we have learned that takes the form of our mother's voice in our heads. "Be careful!" "Chew your food well!" "Be kind to your sisters!" But even deeper than those simple admonitions are the more profound moments like, "I'm proud of you." "You did good." "I love you." These are the words that shape our understanding of self as well as form the basis of good relationships with others. Most of the time, these words are good words lodged into our psyche and they lead us to have good relationships with others. But sometimes, we mishear those words or misinterpret them. Sometimes they were lacking and left unheard because they were left unsaid. This begs the question for the next generation: "What words do we want in our children's heads when they grow up?" What example do we want to set? If we aren't intentional about it, we might unintentionally put destructive thoughts into the hearts and minds of our children, like, "You aren't good enough." "You aren't loveable." These wreak havoc on the psyche and the soul. What if instead they hear, "You can do it; I believe in you." "You are lovely and beloved, and you are worth the sacrifice."

Like little children imitate what we see, we do as we have been taught. We repeat not only the vices but also the virtues of our parents. In a similar way, we called to imitate what we have seen and heard from God, our loving Father. The Father Himself loves you. We are called to internalize His words to us and then imitate His example.

St. James, in the epistle today, reminds us to be doers of the word, not just hearers. "If you love me, keep my commandments," Jesus says. Jesus gave us a new commandment, "Love one another as I have loved you."

We have to be hearers of the word first. The tendency is to try the first half, "Love one another," without knowing, internalizing and abiding in the second half, "even as I have loved you". This is that Pelagianism and Jansenism that seeks self-perfection before we go to God, thinking ourselves too unworthy to approach Him, when He is, in reality, a tender father who is merciful with our mistakes and like a loving mother who embraces us when we are hurt and kisses our wounds.

In Jesus Christ we are personally and sacrificially loved. He knows your name. He took that name in his heart to the cross and willed that you, personally, by name, be saved. He knows every hair on your head. He knows you personally and willingly sacrifices Himself for you. We cannot accomplish the first part of the new commandment without being fully embraced by the second, more important and foundational part, that God has first loved us with an infinite love. In Jesus Christ you are personally and sacrificially loved by a God whose love is infinite.

It is only in surrendering to the all-embracing, personal and sacrificial love of God that we can be healed of the malicious voices that tell us God can't love us on account of our sins or the harmful thought that we have to be perfect before God will love us. These distorted and erroneous thoughts keep us from peace of mind. Only when we have allowed ourselves to truly be loved by God can we then fulfill His commandment to love one another.

We have to be hearers of the word first. But it cannot stop there. We must put His words into action. Even children who have heard all their life the true words that allow them to have good relationships, don't always act on them.

Be ye doers of the word, not just hearers. The greatest deterrent to the spread of the Gospel is Christians not living like Christians. We are all guilty at one point or another. We have not always been the good example of personal and sacrificial love to those around us. This is probably because at some point or another we have failed to



internalize the reality that we are infinitely loved. Wounded people usually wound others out of their hurt. Healed and whole people are generous and gracious because they have tapped into a source of strength. People who have experienced love as meted out in small quantities, rare, finite, and limited, will tend to hoard it and keep it to themselves. We become miserly, thinking that there isn't enough love to go around, and so I have to be cautious and selfish with whom I chose to love. The one who has tapped into the deep well of infinite love and mercy has discovered the fountain of eternal peace and is generous and hands out graciously what comes from a bottomless wellspring. We are most likely somewhere in between these two. This is perhaps because we have not fully submitted to the truth of God's all-embracing love for us and truly trusted that we are His beloved – that the Father has loved us just as He loves Jesus, His beloved Son. We are still trying to earn God's love, instead of accepting His freely given gift of infinite and merciful embrace that has the power to heal and transform us into Holy Ones like Himself.

This is a good source of examination for us. What is some aspect of the Gospel you find difficult to accept? What place in your heart is still resistant to the Word made flesh? What wound have you concealed or never discovered that is still foul and festering? Sit with the Lord in prayer and have an honest conversation with him about it. Is it love of an enemy you find hard? Forgiveness of wrongdoing? Love of the poor? Patience with sinners? Patience with yourself? "Ask the Father any thing in My name, He will give it to you." This is no idle promise. This is the promise of an Eternal One, whose Mercy endures forever. Trust in it and act on it. "Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.

May Jesus Christ be Praised!