

Homily for the 6th Sunday of Easter
Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48 1 Jn 4:7-10 Jn 15:9-17
“God First Loved Us”

Dearly beloved, today is the day the Lord has made, we will be glad and rejoice in it. Happy Mother's Day to all mothers in our community. This day should bring great joy to all women for their unique role in the world and also in the church. No woman should be sad for not having been able to give birth and raise a child. Mothers are celebrated today, not only because they give birth but most importantly, because of their willingness to share their life with another individual, their children. I therefore celebrate all women who have been courageous and kind to defend the course of children to live and be happy, even when this is done through prayer.

There are many women who long to have this experience of bringing forth life, but are unable to because of circumstances beyond their control. I some do not have children today because they may have lost them or for some very complex situation. I pray for healing for all of you on a this day. Remember any woman you know who suffers for reasons related to a “child”. Let us pray for such women to have the means of experiencing motherhood. However, it is sad when a couple deliberately decides not to give birth because they do not want interference in their lives or they do not want their bodies to be out of shape. Let us equally pray for the renewal of such couples. All mothers do are for love of their children. A mother, as always is will to do anything for to express that love. Coincidentally, all the readings today speak about the theme of love.

Friends there is this story of a priest who once asked the congregation about the definition of love. Many people made an attempt, from their own experiences and understanding, to define love. One person who responded said “love is that strong FEELING you have for another person.” Another's response was “love is that appreciation one gives to another;” still another said, “love is being kind and caring to another person!” Many others spoke about the different meanings until one lady said “father, love is God.” The priest asked the lady to explain more about that statement, but she could not find the words to explain what that meant.

Beloved, you all know that love is one word that is so common and applied in many different ways. However, it may be abused at times. It is common knowledge that love, though often spoken of and applied, is equally difficult to define. In our day and age, what most people call love is merely a series of fleeting feelings, such as excitement, lust, and even illusions. Feelings are subject to changes and they often depend on moods. However, what this lady encourages us to do, is to base our definition of love on God, because God is love.

Beloved, yes indeed “God is love.” The apostle John said so (1 John 4:1). The search for the definition of Love in God will lead us to examining love as one of the characteristics of God. When scripture talks about God loving us, it's not talking merely about God's strong feeling, appreciation and all others such descriptions. It's about God's mercy,

kindness, charity, and sacrifice for our sake. So the fundamental basis of love is selflessness which means doing something for another's sake, even at the cost of one's life.

In the Gospel today (John 15:9-17), our Lord Jesus Christ gave his disciples a commandment which is to love one another as he loved them (and us) (John 15:12). He went further to define true love as sacrificial: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13). He went further to qualify the designation "friends" as representing all those who do what He commands, and what did He command? That they should love one another! For love to be genuine and divine, it must be for the interest and eternal good of the object of our love.

In Jesus Christ we discover the full meaning and expression of love. He came on account of God's love for us (John 3:16) and suffered and died so that we can have life and be healed (1 Pet. 2:24). From this viewpoint, we understand that love goes beyond all the attributes we give to it. It is not only selfless; it is also sacrificial. In love we discover one important CONSTANT, and that is giving, or rather of letting go. It means, that to love is to give (to let go): for instance: "God so loved the world that he GAVE his only Son." The lover must be ready to let go of something of a greater value, again for the sake of the beloved.

Friends, Christ commands us today to love one another. Practically speaking, this calls for the breaking down of the walls of enmity, the walls of hatred, the walls of apathy, the walls of disunity, the walls of racial and gender discrimination in all forms etc. To love, is thus not an option but a grave duty we must perform. In fact, it is a necessity and we have no excuse not to love, as without love we have no business with God.

The model and standard of our love follows that of the Trinity: the Father who gave up His Son, the Son who gave His life and the Spirit who gives us love to keep us nourished even when we do not deserve it.

Friends, loving one another through selfless acts and sacrifice is meant for our own survival, peace and joy. We have seen and witnessed the effects of the absence of love; selfishness and greediness, wickedness and unforgiving attitudes, etc. Such situations have been the leading cause of poverty among nations, war among countries, segregation of all forms in communities and families and the list of the destructive effects go on and on. In the book of 1 Corinthians 13:13, St. Paul admonishes us that the three greatest virtues that will remain are: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."

As we launch into the sixth Sunday of Easter, let us be attentive to the Lord's command that we must love one another as He loved us. Love is actually the fundamental phenomenon that drives the Christian life. Hence without love there will definitely be no Christianity. The message today is clear, we must love and not hate just as God continuously loves us. Again, I wish all our women "a happy Mother's Day."