

6th Sunday of Easter – May 5-6, 2018

These last weeks in the Gospel Jesus has been giving us a progressive teaching on the new relationship that he has brought about between us and God.

A couple weeks ago he spoke of Himself as the Good Shepherd watching over us and giving his life for his sheep.

Last week, he spoke of himself as the vine and we as the branches who draw our life from Him. This image conveyed our deep dependency on Jesus --- as he says, without me you can do nothing.

Today Jesus reveals that our relationship with He and the Father is one that is even deeper and more intimate.

We are not just dependent on them for life, the Father and He choose to give themselves to us regardless of who we are and how we respond. “You did not chose me, I chose you.” Jesus tells us that he has made us participants in the very life of God who is love. --- He says – “As the Father loves me, so I also love you.”

He is the beloved Son of the Father. His life in God is a relationship of love. Therefore, he calls us to be a community of people whose vocation is to share his love.

First, he shares the life of God who is love with us, loving us in the greatest way possible – laying down his life for us – and then, having brought us into the life of God – he commands, but even more so – pleads with us to remain in this love by sharing it with others – by loving others as he loves us and is empowering us to love.

Sometimes it is hard to understand why Jesus offers us a share in his risen life, and why God wants us to live with him forever. Why doesn't God just forget about us? In this immense universe God created, we are so small. Why

should God go to all the trouble he did to bring us to eternal life? Maybe we have never asked ourselves these questions. Maybe we think that we are such wonderful creatures that God can't help loving us.

Well, we know we humans are not always such wonderful individuals, but it is true that God can't help loving us because that is the way God is. God is love St. John tells us in today's second reading. Just like the sun has to shine because that is what the sun does, God loves us because that is what God does.

And, in spite of our imperfections, God's love reaches out to all people. This was the big revelation we heard about in today's first reading. The Jews presumed they had a monopoly on God's love. Indeed they did have a monopoly in that God gave them the special gift of his revelation before the time of Jesus, but Jesus fulfilled all that had gone before and revealed that God is calling all people to know his saving love.

More than that he calls us friends. "I call you not servants but friends." Servants of the King are the most important persons after the King. However, today Christ tells us, "you are not "servants" – not even the greatest ones. You are something more. You are equal friends among yourselves and with God. We are called to become equal to God. Why? Because the love that the Father has for Jesus, Jesus has given to us, and we can love with that same love of God and become like God who is love. So we are friends or equals with God.

In today's Gospel – Jesus call his disciples – and us – his friends. Jesus' self-giving love for us, his friends, forms the model for the love we are to have for one another. I tell you this, he says, so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

He invites us to enter into his love and to express this love in our daily lives. Only if we love one another as he has loved us can we be his true friends and remain in his love. – Let us accept his offer today by having faith in him and sharing his merciful love with others.

The author, Brennan Manning, tells the story of an Irish priest, who while on a walk around his parish, saw an old peasant kneeling by the side of the road, praying. Impressed, the priest said to the man, “You must be very close to God.”

The peasant looked up from his prayers, thought a moment, and then said with a big smile, “Yes, He’s very fond of me.”

From then on, Manning would always say on introducing himself to other: “I am the one Jesus loves.” He borrowed this phrase from the Gospel where Jesus’ closest friend on earth, the disciple John, is identified as “the one Jesus loved.”

Manning says, “If John were to be asked, ‘What is your primary identity in life?’ he would not reply, ‘I am a disciple, an apostle, an evangelist, an author of one of the four Gospels, but rather, ‘I am the one Jesus loves.’” Today’s Gospel and the second reading remind us that our primary identity in life as Christians should be “the one Jesus loves.”

Love is the key to everything --- it explains why God created us, it explains why Jesus came to earth. It explains why God wants us to live with him forever. It explains the Mass we celebrate, and it explains how we are to act toward one another. This love is what Christ has entrusted to us and the love that we participate in if we remain in his word ---- “This I command you, that you love each other.”