

## Homily for Second Sunday of Easter, 2021

**In the mystery of our faith, there is link between loving God and loving our neighbor. Most preaching – even in the early days of the Church - has been concerned about remembering to love our neighbor if we say we love God.**

**In fact, in the First Letter of Saint John, right before today’s second reading, we find the words:**

**“We love because he first loved us...whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. This is the commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.” (4:19-21)**

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**But there is a dialogue here. The traffic of love flows in both directions. In today’s passage, we read of the other side of the mystery; that, “we know we love the children of God when we love God.”**

**If we love God, we love His Begotten – which is Christ. But through Christ all who are Christians are born again in water and the Spirit. So, if we love God and obey His commands, then we have the ability to love each other who are members of Christ’s body. As we remember Our Lord saying at the Last Supper: “This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:35)**

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**And we are called not just to love each other, though that is the obvious next layer outward from us loving God.**

**We also are to love the stranger, the widow, the orphan, those who are our neighbors, and our enemies. We are to love everyone.**

**This is impossible. Except if the Spirit lives in us. And it is only in that God-given love of others that we can tell others about Christ. It is only in that God-given love that we can desire that all will have God’s love filling them up as well.**

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**That is one of the reasons for the Resurrection. To receive that new life in Christ. To be created anew. That is part of the message in our Gospel passage today.**

**When Christ comes to the Disciples on the evening of the Resurrection, He gives them the Holy Spirit; by breathing on them.**

**He Breathes on them. This action takes us back to the first chapters in the Book of Genesis. God created all living things. For animals, one basic indication of life would be – breath. The word for “breath” was the word for “spirit.” All living things have some kind of a spirit, or soul, that organizes them in order that all their parts work together.**

**But humanity is specifically mentioned as having been made in the image and likeness of God. And further, that creation is described as God breathing into Adam – Adam’s breath coming from God in a special way. And though other creatures live, Adam is called a living being. Human life is distinct, special. It has a special relationship with God.**

**Christ is the New Adam. He is the beginning of a newness for humanity. As God – Christ creates Humanity anew by breathing the Holy Spirit onto the Disciples.**

**This first day of the week is the first day of a new creation. The Spirit dwells within humanity which has been touched by Christ in a profoundly different way starting with Easter.**

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**I am using the word “New” quite a bit. Perhaps if we hear it too much it can seem – old. That may be one of the ongoing frustrations we experience; trying to grasp that our life is always new when we live it every day. Living in Christ is a New Life; a new life to come, and also a new life here and now.**

**But the Easter faith is not the proverbial magic pill. More and more each day we need to let the Son (and the Father and the Holy Spirit) convert us. The Gospel for today is a perfect example of this. Christ is risen, yet even by the following week, the Resurrection has not completely transformed their lives. The lives of those who experienced His resurrected self are so unchanged that even one of**

**their own – Thomas - is not convinced. And Thomas himself is not convinced, even though he walked with Our Lord for years.**

**It will take a lifetime of walking with Christ and in the Spirit to see permanent growth in love within them. Still – what they would do under the guidance of the Spirit would always far exceed their own personal limitations.**

**And their love would change the world. But not in a worldly fashion. Not by building and conquering. Instead, by loving, giving, and sharing. Sharing not worldly wealth, but the riches of the relationship with God they have been given.**

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**The great Easter Mystery of our redemption is one of letting that word “New” in “Good News” grant us fresh eyes. Christ is alive - not as an historical oddity, but to Give us new life. That new life entails loving others, but not as a final goal. In fact, we cannot long love others if God’s love is not in us. And allowing God’s love in us can only happen if we love and desire God and God’s will. And the Spirit of truth will make God’s will known to us, and enable us to live it.**