

Homily for 6th Sunday of Easter – May 8-9.

We are one week away from celebrating the Feast of the Ascension of our Lord bodily into heaven, which took place forty days after His Resurrection. Then the next week we celebrate the fiftieth day after Easter – Pentecost; when the Holy Spirit descended upon the members of disciples, empowering them to go and make disciples of all the nations and baptize and teach them to observe all of Jesus’ commandments. Pentecost is the final day of the Fifty days of the Easter season.

Every year, during these last few Sundays of Easter as we approach Pentecost, we read from Our Lord’s instructions at the Last Supper in the Gospel according to Saint John. At the Last Supper, Christ teaches before he goes. His teaching does not make sense if it is understood only as His going to die on the Cross. It can only be understood as Him teaching what the Ascension and Pentecost will mean for the Church.

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So, these readings are particularly important for those preparing for Confirmation, as well as all of us who have already be Confirmed. The Holy Spirit is not specifically mentioned in this gospel passage, though He is in Christ’s whole speech to the disciples. But the readings prepare us, nonetheless, for celebrating the Spirit of Life and Love dwelling within us.

The Passion, Death and Resurrection are inexorably linked to the descent of the Holy Spirit. Easter and Pentecost are parts of one saving event. And in the same way, Baptism and Confirmation are linked. We are baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection when the Holy Spirit is poured out upon us. The Holy Spirit comes down upon us again in Confirmation to strengthen our Baptism as it strengthened and enlivened the Apostles two thousand years ago.

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What is it we receive from our Gospel lesson today? First, we can recall that last week when Our Lord spoke of Himself being the vine and we the branches, He called us to remain in Him. Today’s passage picks up on His teaching from last week. We remain in Him when we keep His commandment to love each other as

He has loved us. Jesus continues to speak of that love. He uses a word that to this day is a very powerful word to our ears. The word is FRIEND. He tells us His love for us is that of friendship. His love is so great He died for us. And our command is for us to love in that way.

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Another lesson from today's gospel reading addresses how we can love as He loves us. If we look at the whole argument Jesus presents, we see it is the main message throughout all our readings today; we can love, because we have received love. We love because He has loved first.

In the Gospel Jesus teaches us that as the Father has loved Him, He has loved us, and we are to remain in His love by loving each other as well. But note, we do not have to create love. Christ has given us His love. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of love given to us. The Person of God the Holy Spirit is love. He fills us with love. We overflow with God's love. So we have love to spare.

In our First Reading from the Acts of the Apostles, we again hear that God acts first. In this case, the Holy Spirit came down on the listeners in a way reminiscent of the Spirit descending upon Eldad and Medad in the desert (Numbers 11:24-30). In this case, the Holy Spirit comes before Baptism. Baptism is not excluded. But the order reception is the same as that spoken of in the gospel. God bestows His loving presence upon the listeners, and therefore they can be loving disciples.

Our Responsorial is all about praising God for what God has already done. God loves first, we love in return.

Finally: our Second Reading states this lesson as plainly as possible. "...love is of God...In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins."

God loves, and so we love.

Why do we Baptize and get baptized? So that we can love. Why do we run to get Confirmed? So that the Holy Spirit of Love can enable us to love all the more; so that the fulness of the Crucifixion, Easter, and Pentecost may work in us.

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And of course, When we talk of being loved first so that we may understand love and know that we are loved and be able to love others – we think of parents.

And particularly today, we given thanks to the example of Mothers, and the love of all those who have let us know that we are loved. We give thanks to God for all those whom God has used to bring love into the world.