

## Homily - Sixth Sunday of Easter

“Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God.”

There’s so much packed into that line, isn’t there?

Love one another. It sounds almost too simple, but that’s the principle that underlies so much of our daily life as Christians.

Love. Not a superficial or shallow thing, but rather, as the prayers of the Easter Vigil reminded us, charity beyond all telling.

And that love of neighbor is by necessity an impossibility unless we first encounter the love of God.

Why? Saint John put it clearly.

Because God is love. To give love, real love, is to give God.

This is the mission of our life: to give God to the world.

That’s the nature of what it means to be an apostle, after all.

Think about the incredible journeys and persecution and misunderstandings that Saint Peter and the other apostles had each experienced in their work to share the beauty of the Gospel.

What could they possibly have to give that was worth that kind of suffering and difficulty?

They were giving God. And in giving them to others, they opened the door for these people to then do the same, and hand on the same joy of the Gospel - joy that outweighed any opposition.

In the conversion of the Gentiles in the tenth chapter of the book of Acts, the Lord even granted a special grace, a sign of the Holy Spirit's work in their hearts.

For the apostles, this was a beautiful outward sign of the same inward reality that we ourselves experience as members of the Lord's Body - beginning from the day of our baptism, God himself, in the person of the Holy Spirit, has come to live within us.

That's the secret to love. As much as we might want to tell ourselves otherwise, we don't have the natural strength or capacity to give of ourselves to the degree Our Lord asks.

The love of an apostle is a supernatural love - it's God himself loving in and through us.

It's no accident that we are turning toward this reflection on the love of God and the work of the Holy Spirit as we move toward the end of the Easter season, which will culminate in the Solemnity of Pentecost.

Just as Christ himself prepared his apostles to receive this gift after the Ascension, he is preparing our hearts as well.

If we learn anything from the apostles, it's that our own preparation shouldn't start dramatically.

Quite the opposite - it should begin with humility.

What was the first thing Saint Peter said to Cornelius when he was welcomed into his home?

“Get up. I myself am also a human being.”

If there's one thing that gets in the way of God's work in our lives... it's us.

We all know this - the thing that stops the Gospel from transforming our lives and the lives of those we care about isn't a big, extraordinary thing - it's people.

And usually it's us, thinking we're more important than we are, and forgetting that God is the one who should be fighting the battles, loving the brokenhearted, and instructing those who seek his truth.

We have to let go of our preconceptions of what that apostolic love will look like in practice, and we have to set aside our pride that would convince us to do it our way on our own time.

And the only way to do *that*, as the great contemplative, the Apostle John, would remind us - is to know God.

Not just to know him in a passing, superficial way, but to know his heart.

To know his love in its full richness, as only he can offer.

The Lord has revealed that love to us, most of all in the love and sacrifice of his Son, and the joy of his resurrection.

This is the mystery at the heart of this sacred time, which has unfolded before us throughout the weeks of the Paschal season.

This is the joy of our Christian vocation, that Our Lord knew us from before the beginning of time and loved us to the end.

That is the love we are called to, the love which we hand on to the world.

But before we go out on that mission, before we do anything else, Christ gives us a simple invitation:

Remain in my love.

Before we 'do', we must first 'remain'. Remain in his presence, remain in silence, remain aware and grateful for how he has revealed himself in your life.

Don't worry about the next thing or the next decision. We're too worried about our schedules and our activities and our obligations.

If you truly can't get away from them, then maybe we shouldn't be doing so much at all.

Our Lord wants to spend time with you. Remain with him. Let him speak.

Let that encounter begin from his altar, the re-presentation of that love beyond all telling, that love which we carry to bear fruit that will remain.