

6th Sunday of Easter (B)
(Acts 10:25-26. 34-35. 44-48 / John 15:9-17)
09.05.2021

Dear brothers and sisters,

I propose three words to guide our meditation this morning: Love, Joy and Friend.

Love! We have just heard Jesus say: “Love one another as I have loved you.” Love is a word we use to say everything and its contrary! We have to be cautious when we use this word. The risen Lord does not invite us just to love, but to love as he loved us. What is important is the little word “as”. We have to love as the Lord loved and continues to love us.

So, let us look at the way Jesus loved in order to learn how to love in a Christian perspective. For example, when Jesus was treated unjustly and dealt with violently, he did not pay back ‘eye for eye, tooth for tooth’. He never reacted to violence with violence. On the contrary, he broke the circle of violence, taking it upon himself rather than giving it back. Jesus always reacted to violence with love. He offered mercy and forgiveness in response to any act of injustice or violence perpetrated against him. When Jesus was treated unjustly or violently, he did not become angry with the perpetrators or even moody in their regard. He did not turn his head the other way and ignore his aggressor. He always remained quiet and at peace. He engaged himself in a process of forgiveness, and never tired of being ready to forgive.

How do we behave when we are offended? Do we give back what we have received? Or do we try to break the circle of violence? To use an image dear to Father Ronald Rolheiser: When we are victim of injustice and violence, do we act like an electric wire, letting violence flow through us, receiving violence and transmitting violence? Or do we act like a water filter, receiving dirty water, keeping the dirt within ourselves and giving back pure water? Jesus acted like a water filter. We are called to act like a water filter and not like an electric wire. This is easy to say! It is so difficult to put into practice! But this is the way to life and happiness!

Another way to love as Jesus loved is revealed in the washing of his disciples’ feet. Jesus loved by humbly serving his disciples. Jesus did not lord it over them. He did not use or abuse his disciples. He took care of their basic needs. He respectfully proposed to help them without ever imposing himself.

In light of this, we could ask ourselves: How do we relate with others? Are we bossy? Do we use others? Do we abuse or exploit their kindness? Or do we love, serve and respect others? Do we help them grow and become who they truly are in God’s eyes? Let us ask the Risen Lord for the grace to love as he loved.

The second word is Joy! You will recall Jesus’ words heard this morning: “I have told you: Love one another as I have loved you, so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete”. What do we know about Jesus’ own joy? Jesus’ joy came from the loving presence of his Father which was always offered to him in prayer. Jesus’ joy was to know his Father’s will and to do it.

Jesus' joy was to reveal to all human beings that they were loved by the Father. Jesus' joy was to reveal this good news to all humanity by loving every person he met as his Father loved him.

Our joy is to believe in the promise that the Risen Lord made to us just before his Ascension into heaven: "I am with you always". The Risen Lord is not very far above us. He is with us, at our level, in our midst. He is praying to the Father within us. He is walking the path of life beside us; his hand is placed upon our shoulder. He talks to us through his word. He cares for us through his Church. We are not alone. The Risen Lord is with us. This is the source of our joy.

The Risen Lord manifests his presence to us in the events of the world, not only when all is going well, but also in our trials, like in the present pandemic for example through which the Lord invites us to a greater solidarity. The Risen Lord manifests his presence also in nature: today new life is blooming all around us: we are surrounded by colours, smells and sounds – the wonder and beauty of the natural world.

Our joy has its source in the multifaceted loving presence of the Risen Lord in our midst. This is the perfect happiness of the messianic era which is communicated to us by the Risen Lord.

The third word is friend. We heard in today's gospel passage: "You are my friends, if you do what I command you. I shall no longer call you servants any more, because a servant does not know his master's business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father". We are servants but we are more than servants; we are friends, because we know the will of the Father for all his children since it was revealed to us by Christ Jesus.

Friendship evokes the memory of Moses who used to speak to God in prayer as a friend speaks with his friend. When we pray to God as a friend speaks with his friend, the Risen Lord is present and we are present. We enjoy a mutuality of presence, a communion, an intimate encounter which could be compared to the encounter of the bridegroom with his bride which is the Church, that is to say each one of us. When the Risen Lord says that we are his friends, this is not something banal; this is good news. We should be filled with awe. We are not only the Lord's servants; we are his friends.

The fact that we are not only servants but above all friends of Jesus is one explanation among others of why we are meant to stand on our feet during the Eucharistic prayer. With the Risen Lord, we praise our Heavenly Father and listen to him in order to know and do his will. We welcome the Risen Lord within us as a friend welcomes his friend. "I shall no longer call you servants any more; I call you friends".

We are all looking for lasting joy and happiness! We are all looking for friendship!

The direction to follow to attain this end is to love one another as the Lord loved us. May the Holy Spirit help us to follow the Lord's way day after day!