**Sixth Sunday of Easter, Cycle B, 2015**

May 9/10, 2015

Acts 10: 25-26, 34-35,44-48; 1 John 4: 7-10; John 15: 9-17

It is easy to “love” this passage from the Gospel. We “love” to hear it. Many today use the word “love” to explain or justify living in ways that are contrary to the Gospel and to human nature and the common good of everyone. When you ask someone why they do what goes against God’s law and the natural law written in our hearts, they often will reply, “Because of love.”

We use the word “love” to justify a whole lot of things nowadays, including our bad behavior and our confused thinking, and our misplaced beliefs. The word “love” has lost its Christian meaning, and has been reduced to meaning “affection” for something or someone.

This Gospel today is actually a daring Gospel, a real challenge to every one of us. It is a daunting challenge. It is a challenge to do something *great, magnificent, bold*, *and different* from what society would have us do. It is a call to excellence and a call to greatness. It is a call to real love.

My friends, God does not call you to smallness. God is not calling this parish to smallness or mediocrity. God is not calling the Church to small changes. No; He is calling us to great things, even things that may seem heroic at times.

In the Gospel today, Jesus doesn’t say, “Just try a little harder, would you?” What does he say? “***I command you: Love one another***.” It is a command. He commands us to love each other in heroic ways, even to lay down our lives if necessary. The kind of love that is truly great is not the kind of love we usually think about, i.e., feeling attracted to someone or something. The kind of love that is truly great is a love that is found in holding on to the Truth of who we are and who we are meant to be. It is found in grasping on to who God is, who he has revealed himself to be. It is found in accepting the truth that God exists and he is the source of all truth. Our thoughts and opinions and feelings are not the sources of truth, it is God.

For example: God made us male and female. God made marriage to be between a man and a woman. God made us in such a way that we are to live and die for others. God established the Church as a community of believers and gave us the sacraments to help us through this life. All of this is from God, so we do not make ourselves male or female depending on our desires. We cannot redefine marriage based on affections alone, or political or social correctness. We do not have the right to take all our gifts and talents that God has given us and use them only for ourselves. We cannot pretend to not need the Church and the sacraments

Yes, God is calling all of us to greatness. God is calling us to the fullness of love which we can only begin to imagine. He doesn’t want mediocrity in our lives. He doesn’t want minimal effort or small changes. He wants great things. He wants us to give our all, to give everything we have, our whole heart, our whole mind, our whole selves, give it all to him. This is the first commandment, is it not? God is not calling this parish to mediocrity and now is the time for change. God is calling this parish to great things, to a great love. He wants us to become who he made us to be no matter how talented or inept ***we*** ***may think we are***. We are called to love greatly. Now is the time for great things. Now is the time for to love each other in a more excellent way.

A former theology professor once said that we cannot comprehend the depths to which we as a people had fallen from God, nor the heights to which we are now called by Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus said the same when he said, “I no longer call you slaves… I have called you friends” With the death and resurrection of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit, we now are called by God, St. John said, to go forth and bear fruit that will endure. All of us are called to this excellence, and now is the time to challenge ourselves to love as Jesus has commanded us, to bear fruit. Indeed, the great truth that is so evident if we read the Scriptures, and the great mystery of Christianity is this: God over and over again revealed himself to us throughout history, revealing himself and reaching out to us in love until he finally in the fullness of time and of love did what was unimaginably great, i.e., he took on our humanity and he died and rose again so that we might know clearly what love really is, what it really means. Then he looked at us and commanded us, “I have pulled you up from the depths of sin and have raised you up high with me. I no longer call you slaves, but friends. Love others like I have loved.” At that moment, he commanded us to greatness, and promised to give us the grace and the strength to do just that in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let no one here today think that God does not love them enough to expect greatness from them. Let no one here today walk out of this morning’s Mass thinking God only expects mediocre, small things from them. No… God calls us now to love as he has loved.

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