

A\_Easter\_6thSunday – 4/27/2008

Deacon Mike Bickerstaff

*We Are Loved By The Father*

In our Gospel today, Jesus continues to prepare His Apostles for His departure and the coming of the Holy Spirit. After three long years with them, these are among His final words of instruction. These words must be important. He tells them that if they love Him, they will keep His commandments.

Earlier in His public ministry Jesus told a scribe that the greatest of the commandments is that we are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and that the second is that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Now we would think that the Apostles understood this. They loved Jesus... they were trying to live good and holy lives. Yet He knew they still needed to learn to love as He does and so do we. Jesus makes it very simple... for them and for us, “love one another as I have loved you.” Do we love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength? Do we love one another as Jesus loves us? If we say that we love Jesus, we have to take seriously these words of His. We must be people of love.

Some of you might be thinking, “Oh no, not another homily on love! Right?” But we have to listen to Jesus... He deems it essential that His Apostles get this right... and so must we, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you... love one another as I have loved you.” If we are going to be His disciples... if we are going to say that we love Jesus... WE MUST BE PEOPLE OF LOVE!

So how do we love Him and love one another?

You have heard me ask this before... “What is your most important task on earth? What is the meaning of my life?” The Catechism teaches us we are to know, love and serve God in this life so as to be with Him forever in the life to come. The most important thing we do is to attain heaven and to be the instruments by which others attain heaven.

We serve God by serving others... by being Christ to them. But notice that service comes after knowing and loving God. We cannot love others, with the love of Christ, unless we first love Him. Notice also that loving God comes after knowing Him. We cannot love God, if we do not know Him. And we cannot know Him, if we do not spend time with Him, each day in prayer.

Did you pray yesterday? If not, why not? Does it seem like you just don't ever have time to pray? I can promise you without hesitation, that if you will commit to spending just 30 minutes a day, alone in prayer, planning your day around your prayer instead of your prayer around your day, the loving and serving part will come as surely as the light of day follows the dark of night. I can guarantee it!

And you know what else, if you do this, one day soon, you will find yourself spending an hour or more in daily prayer... loving God more deeply and intensely than you ever imagined possible.

In so knowing and loving God, Jesus increases and we decrease. We come to truly place Him who is above all at the very center of our lives... and then we will love others as He has loved us being Christ to those we place in our lives.

You see, we do not exist to bring people to ourselves, but rather to bring people to Him. Who do people see when they see you? Do they see the Lord?

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In preparing for this homily, I came across a story that might help us to see how we can be Christ to others. We are all busy people, so I imagine that this story might strike a chord with you. Four men were rushing to catch a plane home from Chicago where they had been together at a convention. They each had somewhere important to be that night. You know what it is like to be in a hurry.

As they ran down the concourse, they inadvertently kicked over a table of apples. The apples flew everywhere. Three of the men kept running and made it to their plane on time. One man did not. He decided to stay behind to help the vendor pick up the apples. And he was glad he did. As it turned out, the person selling the apples was a young girl who was totally blind. She was crying and lost in the rush of the crowds as she tried to find her apples.

Now you have all been to the Atlanta airport when it is busy... so you know how hectic a busy airport can be... so you can easily imagine how this girl must have felt... lost and all alone... unable to even see the apples rolling around on the floor as she hopelessly tried to find them. And then this man who had caused her distress knelt down and picked up all the apples, placing those that were undamaged back on her table. He collected the damaged apples in a sack and offered the girl \$40 for them. He apologized for his carelessness and asked her if she was okay. Through her tears, she nodded yes.

As he was leaving, she asked him, “Sir, are you Jesus?”

That simple question, following his act of kindness, changed his life and I bet his kindness changed hers too. That is what you do if you love Jesus... if we truly love Him, and keep His commandments, people will see Jesus when they look at us. And when we fail, we ask forgiveness and pray for the grace to do better next time.

Who do people see when they look at you? Who do you see when you look at me? God knows that all too often, when people look at me, they do not see Him. So, I ask you to forgive me... and to pray for me... for those times that I failed to be Jesus for you.

Jesus promised that if we love Him, He will not leave us orphans. That even though the world will no longer see Him as it did before He returned to the Father, that we would see Him still, because the Blessed Trinity... Father, Son and Holy Spirit would come to live in us. And because of our dying to self, others would see Him when they looked at us.

The God of the universe loves you. He sent His Son so that you might know Him. His Son has sent the Holy Spirit to be with you always. Let God love you. Let Him speak with you.

If you take away one thing from this homily, let it be this... to be a people of love we must be a people of prayer.

To love others as Christ loves you, you must first love Jesus... to truly love Jesus, you must come to know Him... to come to know Him, you must spend time with Him in prayer each day... whether it is assisting at Holy Mass, praying the rosary, reading and meditating on Scripture... place yourself in the Presence of God Who loves and cherishes you. Talk to Him... and also be silent... for He wants to talk to you too.

God Bless you.

## Acts

### Chapter 8

5

Thus Philip went down to (the) city of Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah to them.

6

With one accord, the crowds paid attention to what was said by Philip when they heard it and saw the signs he was doing.

7

For unclean spirits, crying out in a loud voice, came out of many possessed people, and many paralyzed and crippled people were cured.

8

There was great joy in that city.

14

Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent them Peter and John,

15

who went down and prayed for them, that they might receive the holy Spirit,

16

for it had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

<sup>1</sup>

17

Then they laid hands on them and they received the holy Spirit.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> [16] Here and in [Acts 10:44-48](#) and [Acts 19:1-6](#), Luke distinguishes between baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus and the reception of the Spirit. In each case, the Spirit is conferred through members of the Twelve (Peter and John) or their representative (Paul). This may be Luke's way of describing the role of the church in the bestowal of the Spirit. Elsewhere in Acts, baptism and the Spirit are more closely related ([Acts 1:5](#); [11:16](#)).

## Psalms

### Chapter 66

1

<sup>1</sup> For the leader. A song; a psalm.

2

Shout joyfully to God, all you on earth; sing of his glorious name; give him glorious praise.

3

Say to God: "How awesome your deeds! Before your great strength your enemies cringe.

4

All on earth fall in worship before you; they sing of you, sing of your name!" Selah

5

<sup>2</sup> Come and see the works of God, awesome in the deeds done for us.

6

He changed the sea to dry land; through the river they passed on foot. Therefore let us rejoice in him,

7

who rules by might forever, Whose eyes are fixed upon the nations. Let no rebel rise to challenge!

Selah

16

Come and hear, all you who fear God, while I recount what has been done for me.

20

Blessed be God, who did not refuse me the kindness I sought in prayer.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> [Psalm 66] In the first part ([Psalm 66:1-12](#)), the community praises God for powerful acts for Israel, both in the past (the exodus from Egypt and the entry into the land [[Psalm 66:6](#)]) and in the present (deliverance from a recent but unspecified calamity [[Psalm 8-12](#)]). In the second part ([Psalm 66:13-20](#)), an individual from the rescued community fulfills a vow to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving. As often in thanksgivings, the rescued person steps forward to teach the community what God has done ([Psalm 66:16-20](#)).

<sup>2</sup> [5-6] Cf the events described in [Exodus 14:1-15, 21](#); [Joshua 3:11-4:24](#) and Psalm 114.

## 1 Peter

### Chapter 3

15

but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope,

16

but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame.

17

For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that be the will of God, than for doing evil.

18

For Christ also suffered <sup>1</sup> for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God. Put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the spirit.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> [18] Suffered: very many ancient manuscripts and versions read "died." Put to death in the flesh: affirms that Jesus truly died as a human being. Brought to life in the spirit: that is, in the new and transformed existence freed from the limitations and weaknesses of natural human life (cf [1 Cor 15:45](#)).

## John

### Chapter 14

15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.  
16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate <sup>1</sup> to be with you always,  
17 the Spirit of truth, <sup>2</sup> which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you  
18 know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you.  
19 I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. <sup>3</sup>  
20 In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me, because I live and you will live.  
21 On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you.  
Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me  
will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him."

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> [16] Another Advocate: Jesus is the first advocate (paraclete); see [1 John 2:1](#), where Jesus is an advocate in the sense of intercessor in heaven. The Greek term derives from legal terminology for an advocate or defense attorney, and can mean spokesman, mediator, intercessor, comforter, consoler, although no one of these terms encompasses the meaning in John. The Paraclete in John is a teacher, a witness to Jesus, and a prosecutor of the world, who represents the continued presence on earth of the Jesus who has returned to the Father.

<sup>2</sup> [17] The Spirit of truth: this term is also used at Qumran, where it is a moral force put into a person by God, as opposed to the spirit of perversity. It is more personal in John; it will teach the realities of the new order ([John 14:26](#)), and testify to the truth ([John 14:6](#)). While it has been customary to use masculine personal pronouns in English for the Advocate, the Greek word for "spirit" is neuter, and the Greek text and manuscript variants fluctuate between masculine and neuter pronouns.

<sup>3</sup> [18] I will come to you: indwelling, not parousia.