

Homily – John 15: 9 – 17
Sixth Sunday of Easter, Year B
08/ 09 May 2021, Sooeey

It was a busy morning, about 8:30, when an elderly gentleman in his 80's arrived to have his stitches removed from his thumb. He said he was in a hurry as he had an appointment at 9:00 am. The medico took his vital signs and had him take a seat and evaluated his wound. It was well healed, and so he talked to one of the doctors, got the needed supplies to remove his sutures and redress his wound. While taking care of his wound, the medico asked his patient if he had another doctor's appointment since he was in such a hurry. The gentleman said that he needed to go to the nursing home to eat breakfast with his wife. And in response to the physician's question about her health, the old man said that she had been there for a while and that she was a victim of Alzheimer's disease. When the medical practitioner asked him whether she would be upset if he was a bit late, the elderly gentleman replied that she no longer knew who he was, that she had not recognized him in five years now. The practitioner was surprised, and asked him why if his wife didn't know who he was, he went every morning faithfully for the breakfast. The old man smiled and said, "She doesn't know me, but I still know who she is."

Yes! That is true love. True love is an acceptance of all that is, that has been, that will be, and that will not be. And in today's Gospel Jesus commands us to practice this type of sacrificial and selfless love following His footsteps. And the Scripture passages declare the profound truth that those who believe in Christ and obey His commandment of love "*remain in*" God and God in them.

Now, after telling the parable of the vine and branches, Jesus, in today's Gospel, teaches the disciples that they are to obey His commandment of love just as Jesus has obeyed His Heavenly Father's will by fulfilling His commandments and remaining inseparably bonded with His Father. Well! Love is the basis of all our relationships in life. But it is the Lord who teaches us to love. He gives us a commandment to love one another as He has loved us. And how has Jesus loved us? He has loved us even though we at times are selfish and manipulative. He has loved us even though we often do not deserve His love. So, Jesus gives us no room to escape from his command. We are to love others even though we may feel that they do not deserve to be loved.

And, 'this seemingly impossible way of loving' becomes possible only when we abide in God's love.

For He says: “Remain in my love, then my joy will be yours and your joy will be complete”. In other words, Jesus is telling us that we must first receive His love in order to give this love to others.

When Fr. Damien arrived in Molokai to assemble a prefabricated Church for the lepers, he spent the first few weeks sleeping out under the trees, because he was unable to cope with the stench in the hovels of the lepers. He certainly wouldn't dare preach to them about God's love for them, because, as they saw it, that would be offensive. But slowly he opened his heart to the grace of God which enabled him to see the suffering Jesus in them. In no time, he was washing them, bandaging them, and burying them. He came to love them, and, through him, they came to believe that God loved them. He ate food with them from a common bowl, out of which they scooped the food with hands that had no fingers. He caught the disease himself, and he was happy to be able to live and die for them.

Now, Saint Damien of Molokai clearly knew God. Remaining in God's love, he lived by the powerful maxim of Jesus that a man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends.

Well, we need to be persons for others: Jesus demonstrated the love of God for us by living for us and

dying for us. Hence, as Jesus' disciples, we are to be persons for others, sacrificing our time, talents and lives for others. And the most effective way of communicating God's love to others is by treating everyone as a friend, giving everyone the respect he or she deserves, and by being kind and compassionate to everyone in life.

We are all in a time of crisis: a crisis that calls for solidarity. We are still at war with a virus. The COVID-19 pandemic has overwhelmed healthcare systems around the world. And as hundreds of thousands of people continue to die each day from this disease, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact almost every aspect of daily life for the global population. And here in this context the Gospel passage of today becomes very relevant wherein Jesus teaches us that the highest expression of true love is our willingness to lay down our lives for others as He did. Let us then dear friends never forget the suffering humanity around us, for Jesus our Saviour keeps reminding us: "Love one another as I have loved you". And may our families be channels of God's merciful and compassionate love always. God bless you all. **Amen.**

