

**SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER:
MOTHERS DAY, MAY 9th, 2021.
LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I LOVE YOU: Jn 15:9-17**

“All you need is love,” and, “love is the answer,” are wonderful sentiments summed up in an array of music genres, literature, and the scripts of plays and movies. Almost everyone could agree that love is essential, but that does not mean that we know the fullness of what love is or how to practice it. Today is Mothers’ day; Happy Mothers’ day to all of you. You may be grown-up now, but to your mother, you are still fair game for correction.

When his pager went off during a council meeting, Knoxville, Tennessee Police Chief Phil Keith; was startled to see that the call was from his mother. Concerned, he rushed to the press table and phoned her. “Phil Keith are you Chewing Gum? asked his mom, who had been watching the council meeting on cable TV “Yes, ma'am," answered Chief Keith. "Well, it looks awful," his mother said. "Spit it out." Keith dutifully removed the gum and went back to his meeting.

Just because everyone else regards us as responsible adults, doesn't mean that we can fool our Moms. They know better and sometimes they will tell us. Mothers everywhere seem to share certain universal characteristics, but the greatest and most common characteristic of mothers from Bombay to Boston is their love. **Love is the SINGLE greatest defining characteristic of a Mother.**

There is a lot of love in our readings today. In the First Letter of John, he writes that *God is love*. This is neither a description of an *attribute* of God, nor an assertion that God is just a name for capturing how we feel about things. It is a foundational doctrine that describes who and how God *is*: he is “be-ing.” He is active. God is, in the Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, a communion of persons united in perfect love. The Holy Trinity is the perfect example of giving and receiving love.

Through that active, continuous outpouring of love, God created the angels, the universe, and us. John again instructs us by stating, *In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us*. The Lord initiated a loving relationship with us by creating us and calling us into relationship. Of course, we sinned and damaged that relationship, but our loving God sent prophets and leaders to bring us back. Finally, the Father sent the Son to die for us and show us the perfect love of self-sacrifice. *He loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins*.

Like a passionate lover, God pours out abundant love for us, so that we will love in return. If we understand who God is and what he has done for us, the most natural and reasonable response is to love God completely. This is exemplified in our first reading, where Luke tells us that while Peter was speaking to Cornelius, *the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the word*. These were Gentiles, not beholden to the Mosaic law, and not waiting for a messiah. Yet they responded to the love poured for them in the preaching of Peter, and glorified God. To love God completely is to keep his commandments. Jesus says in today’s Gospel, *If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and remain in his love*. The first commandment is to love God with all our heart, all our soul, and all our strength. This requires humility and surrender.

We have to be willing to follow the teachings of our Savior and live as his disciples to really demonstrate our love for him. This is a self-sacrificial love, one where we lay down our lives for one another, either metaphorically or literally.

Do you have friends? I hope so. The question is: “what kind of friends do you have? Even a better question would be “What kind of friend are you? Jesus gives us a real measuring stick for friendship today! It says: **“Love one another as I love you. This I command you to love one another”**”.

Right here Jesus summarizes the key quality of a great Friendship in ONE word; LOVE. It's agape love. The love that gives, the love that sacrifices. Love that is selfless. Love is Patient. That is what is telling of true friendship. To love each other as I have loved you. So we are talking about real deep lasting friendships.

Do you have any, really good friends? And what kind of friend are you? The moment of crisis you will see the true friends. Certain qualities will come out on those hard times! One thing you will absolutely see in a true friend, is Loyalty. Are your friend there ONLY WHEN they NEED you? But no where to be found when your life lands in a ditch? **Talking about Royalty; a true friend is one who walks in when others are walking out!**
Love means a real friendship rooted in loyalty.

A second meaning also. Love means Forgiveness. Does not hold grudges. Do you have friends that remind you all the things you done wrong? Always holding guilt over your head? Think about Jesus for a second. He invested three years in his twelve closest followers. The apostles. He taught them, trained them and poured himself into them, there are friends. Then when crisis hit; their royalty completely broke down. Remember when he is in the Garden praying, the evening before he is crucified. He is preparing for what is about to happen. He tells Peter and his other disciples to keep watch! And each time he goes out to check, they are falling asleep! He then warns Peter, "before the cock crows you are going to deny me three times in the same night"! Peter says; that is not going to happen at all.

Peter is the Rock on which he is to build his church. And Jesus says you will deny me three times and Peter says NO way that is not going to happen! And then it surely happens he denies Jesus as predicted. First the serving girl comes by the fire and says to Peter are you not one of them.....Peter says..... "*Woman, I do not know him*". Another Guy comes up; "Hey I saw you with Jesus...Peter Says NO NOT me..! Third man asserts that his accents betrays Peter and Peter says "*I really do not know what you are talking about.....*" And when he does that the rooster crows and Peter collapses, because he feels he has betrayed the Lord his friend.....

Fast forward a week after the resurrection; Jesus appears to the apostles three times. He pulls Peter aside and says to Peter: "Simon son of John do you love me more than these?" Peter says, Yes Lord, you know that I love you. Jesus says tend my sheep. Jesus again says, Simon son of John do you love me more than these? Peter says, Yes Lord, you know everything, you know that I love you. Jesus says, Feed my sheep. In the end, Jesus is patient with Peter. And he restores him to leadership, even when Peter has dropped the ball in the worst way, Jesus still has the last word and that last word is FORGIVENESS! Peter denied Jesus three times, Jesus forgives Peter three times and restores him! Good friends and good friendships are rooted in forgiveness.

We also find that real love produces Honesty in friendship. True deep friends speak the truth. A true friend does not tell you only what you want to hear. A true friend who loves you will tell you when you have spinach in your teeth. Will tell you things which are even harder to hear. A good friend will confront you when you are making mistakes even when it hurts. A real loving friend is not trying make you feel better, but a real friend hopes to make you a better version of yourself. They love you enough to speak the truth even if it hurts your feelings. Dedication is another component of friendship. Friends sacrifices, selfless. Dedicated love takes a lot of forms. Jesus says it means laying down your life for a friend. Because almost always dedication means sacrifice.