

6th Sunday of Easter, Year B

O Lord, strengthen me to serve You. I hope that You can understand my inadequate language for I love You and I need You.

Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

This is called "the Pentecost of the pagans," and according to Warren Carroll, it took place in 39 A.D.

²⁵When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and, falling at his feet, paid him homage. This would imply that Peter was either divine or angelic.

²⁶Peter, however, raised him up saying, "Get up. I myself am also a human being."

³⁴Then Peter proceeded to speak and said, "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. God shows no favoritism to one nation over another in the New Covenant, but all stand as equal candidates for divine blessing and sonship. This is a big deal for Peter who had earlier denied membership in the "new faith" to non-Jews.

³⁵Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him." Cornelius was already a "proselyte" or "one who feared God," whom we might call a "half convert" to Judaism. This meant that he accepted the Jewish Law but was not circumcised. Here follows Peter's sermon which covers the same ground as the Gospel of Mark which early tradition describes as a summary of Peter's preaching.

⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the word. This Pentecostal experience follows much the same format as the original: 1) Peter preached the gospel, 2) the Spirit descended in a dramatic way, 3) the recipients spoke in different tongues and 4) a call was issued for Baptism.

⁴⁵The circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter (six men from Joppa) were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit should have been poured out on the Gentiles also,

⁴⁶for they could hear them speaking in tongues and glorifying God. These were signs that the Holy Spirit had come upon them. Then Peter responded,

⁴⁷"Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit even as we have?"

⁴⁸He ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. This shows Peter's authority as head of the church in the first decade for he allowed them to become Christians without being circumcised and living as Jews under the Mosaic Law. From the very day of Pentecost the Church has celebrated and administered holy Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and the reception of the Holy Spirit for those who wish to be saved.

1 John 4:7-10

⁷Beloved, John, the writer of this letter, refers to himself as "the beloved disciple." His love for God was truly born of his having first been loved by Jesus. Here he calls us, the readers, "beloved" in order to emphasize that OUR loving is preceded by the love of God for us. let us love one another, This call to love is the basic vocation of every human being! It is important to understand that love is more than an action and much more than a feeling; it is a DECISION. because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God.

⁸Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love.

⁹In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only son into the world so that we might have life through him. God took the initiative! He revealed his innermost secret: God himself

is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son, and Holy spirit, and he has destined us TO SHARE IN THAT EXCHANGE!

10In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins. Some form of the word “love” is used 8 times in this short passage. Paul has tried to explain what it means in 1 Cor. 13: “Love is patient; love is kind. Love is not jealous, it does not put on airs, it is not snobbish. Love is never rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not prone to anger; neither does it brood over injuries. Love does not rejoice in what is wrong but rejoices with the truth. There is no limit to love’s forbearance, to its trust, its hope, its power to endure.” In Romans 12 he also tries to explain that “Your love must be sincere. Detest what is evil, cling to what is good. Love one another with the affection of brothers.”

ACT OF LOVE

O my God, I love you above all things, with my whole heart and soul, because you are all good and worthy of all my love. I love my neighbor as myself for the love of you. I forgive all who have injured me and I ask pardon of all whom I have injured. Amen.

John 15:9-17

Jesus said to his disciples: (At the Last Supper immediately after Judas left the room to betray him, as part of the “farewell discourse.”)

9“As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love.

10If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments Love for the Father expresses itself through obeying his commandments as Jesus did. It was common in ancient society for younger siblings (like us) to look up to the eldest brother (Jesus) for guidance on how to honor and obey one’s parents. Love that does not follow the commandments is license. Those who claim to “love” without following the 6th and 9th commandments are following an idol. When speaking of the great commandment to love God and neighbor in Matthew 22 Jesus says, “On these two commandments the whole law is based and the prophets as well.” **and remain in his love.**

11I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy might be complete.

12This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. This has often been called a “New Commandment” because even after 20 centuries, so few people have tried it! This love of neighbor which Jesus preaches is much more demanding than the Old Testament because Christian love is not measured by man’s heart but by the heart of Christ who gave up his life on the Cross.

13No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. The fullest expression of love consists in pouring out our lives to God as Jesus Christ did on the cross. There are no limits to this love that we are to imitate.

14You are my friends if you do what I command you. The promise of intimacy with Jesus is conditional because it can be fulfilled only IF we commit ourselves to his teaching. Abraham was the first to be called a “friend” of God in the Bible. In the courts of the Roman Emperors and of the eastern kings, there was a very select group of men called “the friends of the king” or “the friends of the Emperor.” At all times they had access to the king: they even had the right to come to his bedchamber at the beginning of the day. He talked to them before he talked to his generals, his rulers, and his statesmen. The friends of the king were those who had the closest and the most intimate connection with him. What an offer! To be his friend means that no longer do we need to gaze longingly at God from afar off; we are not like slaves who have no right whatever to enter into

the presence of the master; we are not like a crowd whose only glimpse of the king is in the passing on some state occasion. Jesus offers US this close familiarity!

¹⁵I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. We have been loved into a new existence. The Christian “hears” the Son even as the Son has “heard” the Father.

¹⁶It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you The Holy Spirit prepares men and goes out to them with his grace, in order to draw them to Christ who, by his word, through signs that manifest the reign of God, and by sending out his disciples, calls all people to come to him. and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, Jesus can demand so much because he loves so much! so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you.

¹⁷This I command you: love one another. When we love, we give up ourselves as the center of things.

****This Thursday is Ascension Thursday, the day to start your novena or nine days of prayer to the Holy Spirit before Pentecost Sunday. Any prayer will do.*

Some of the material for this commentary has been taken from: “The Founding of Christendom” by Warren H. Carroll, the “Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Acts of the Apostles,” the “Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: Year B, 2005” by Aelred R. Rosser, “The Jerome Biblical Commentary,” The Commentary Notes of Tim Grey, the “Catholic Bible Study: John” by Stephen K. Ray, “The Navarre Bible: St John”, “Catechism of the Catholic Church,”

In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.