

Homily for the 6th Sunday of Easter
May 16-17 2009 “B”

When I was in the Seminary we had an old Priest who once preached on this Gospel passage. He said, “Men, there is a big difference between love; L-O-V-E, and luv; L-U-V.” Trying to make his point even more clear he said, “Listen, you can even hear the difference Love and Luv.”

We of course could not hear any difference at all, but his point was a good one. This gospel passage is filled with beautiful statements about this ever popular subject of love. Jesus tells us that the Father loves him, and that he in turn loves us, and that we should love one another. Perhaps we have heard these ideas expressed so often that we no longer realize how profound and dramatic they really are.

When Jesus says that the Father has loved him, he is correcting a very common concept of God. Many people at that time (and perhaps ever since) pictured God as someone very far away, more a theory than a reality, and therefore very distant from them. He was surely all-powerful but, like most powerful ones, he seemed to be cold or even cruel. Isn't God in some way responsible for famine and natural disasters? Doesn't he at least permit the death of young parents and innocent children?

But Jesus tells us that he knows God much better than we do. As eternal Word, he dwells in the lap of his heavenly Father. This description of body language tells us that Jesus hears the very heartbeat of his Father. He assures us that God is a loving Father who wishes only good for us. Most of all, he knows that this loving Father offers us a love that can recreate our sense of purpose and which gives us dignity, value and fulfillment as persons.

Jesus invites us to experience and to trust this life-giving love, to live in the presence of it, and to yearn for it. The mystery of the purpose of human life is revealed to here. We were created to have our fulfillment in knowing and loving God. When we choose to be in a loving relationship with God we become His agents, the instruments by which He transforms the world. Love has an impulse to be shared with others. When we allow God's love to show itself through our actions and attitudes towards others, we become part of that divine love that overcomes all darkness and evil.

The implications of this vision of reality are not hard to see. Most people who do not love, or do not love enough, are usually persons who do not feel that they themselves are loved. It is useless to tell people that they must love others when they have not really been made free to love by experiencing love in their own lives. Too often it is a case of impoverished people trying desperately to give more than they have.

That is why it is so important to hear and to trust the words of Jesus about the love of the Father for us. Jesus is the blueprint for this transformational love. This love is found in Jesus himself, who gave his life for us, but it is also found everywhere in life: in loving family and friends, in the blessings and successes of life, and in every beautiful thing in nature.

Today's gospel acknowledges that there is darkness and evil in life but it asks us to see the powerful goodness that is around us as well. And as we pay attention to the good in life, we will be able to let the evil go by or, at least, to keep it in its place, which is never at the center of life. This is exactly what Jesus did and, with him, we too need to feel the warmth of the Father's love and to share that warmth with all whom we meet in life.