SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER - GOSPEL OF JOHN 15:9-17

**Introduction: In Christ, Our Status Has Changed**

When John wrote this Gospel (probably written in stages from 90 to 110 AD), his community was influenced by a set of religious beliefs called *Gnosticism*. Evidence of this can be found in this Sunday’s Gospel passage.

One of the tenets of Gnostic teaching was the focus on knowledge—or *gnosis*—as the determining factor of faith. John’s Gospel passage is a direct response to this narrow view of faith – for we hear Jesus reminds is disciples (and us) that knowledge needs to be expressed in love. Faith is not merely a “book knowledge” for knowledge leads to love, which leads to action. This is faith. In short, faith is not a noun (knowledge) but a verb(love in action).

Furthermore, John goes on to describe this kind of love. In the Greek, there are two words that are used in this passage for love. The first is *agape* which describes an unconditional, sacrificial love. A costly love. It is considered as the highest and most perfect love, as the soldier or fireman/woman who lays down his/her life for others. The second is *philia* which describes the affection of friendships. John appears to use these words as synonymous. Perhaps because true and lasting friendships have blended elements of sacrificial and costly love?

Also, the root of the Greek word for *friend* comes from this second term for love, philia. By using this word, Jesus transforms the terms of his relationship with his disciples – and us today. We are his friends, not his servants. *In Christ, our status has changed!*

Another aspect of Gnostic belief taught that a believer was an elect person, chosen and set apart

from the world. In contrast, John reminds his community of this essential teaching: To be chosen

by Jesus does not set a disciple apart from the world! Instead, a disciple is chosen to be sent to

serve the world as Jesus did. Like the first disciples, we are also chosen to be in mission. To serve those in need. To sacrifice for others, in a costly love.

I would invite you to take time to read and ponder the words from the *Gospel of John 15:9-17:*

What word or words caught your attention?

What in this passage comforted you?

What in this passage challenged you?

**Further Reflections and Questions:**

“Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the mornings, what you will do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, who you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything. Allow yourself to fall in love with God today!” – Father Pedro Arrupe, Jesuit Provincial.

*What seizes your imagination?*

*What are you in love with?*

Listen to Jesus saying to you: “I call you my friend,” He has chosen me. But it’s not like a job interview, where I’m hoping they’ll think I’m better than I really am. He knows my strengths—and weaknesses—and still chooses me. He has chosen me to be part of his mission*. Can I talk to him about what it is he wants me to do? What is my purpose? My mission?*

*Recall some time in your life when you realized that you were loved.* *What is that memory like?*

*Recall some time in your life when you realized that you loved someone?* *What is that memory like?*

My love for others must not be conditioned by how they respond – or not. Jesus loves me totally, as I am. My own love must have that quality too. This is costly love. *Have you experienced this costly love?*

*Whose love was it that taught me the meaning of that word?*

I can love myself as I am because I am loved by God as I am. I am the beloved of God. (Romans 1:7)

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