

Sixth Sunday of Easter 5-6-18

My beloved, this week we will focus on the question; "which of your actions show that the love for Christ has changed your vision from normal laws and obligations of our society to a to goodwill service of self-giving as your response to God's grace?" And in doing so, how much have you listened to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and followed the mind of Christ – what would Jesus do?? These questions are prompted by the Scriptural voicing of today namely; the conversion and christening of Cornelius and he household, and the propagation of the new commandment – "Love your neighbor as I have loved you." Cornelius and his household were the first pagans and gentiles to be baptized into Christendom. Their inclusion into our faith sparked confusion among the apostolic Christians. Acts of the Apostles 15:2 explained the conflict that conversion of gentiles caused the apostles' Church: "there arose no little dissension and debate". As slavery threatened the survival of a young country called the United States of America in the early 18th century, even so did the rigidity of some minds threaten the life of a struggling Church of Christ in this earliest age. The problem can be reduced to two main inquiries: 1) Are Christians bound by the Mosaic Jewish laws of the Pentateuch? 2) Should the gentiles be received into Christianity without first becoming Jews especially through circumcision? This was a bigger problem than any of us in this Church today can even envision. The only situation comparable to it was the issue of slavery which dragged this country into civil war in the 18th century and threatened the leadership of Abraham Lincoln. The baptism of Cornelius brought no small amount of criticism to Peter and later lead the first Jerusalem Ecumenical Council in 50 AD, Acts 15.

The question whether gentiles can become Christians without first being Jewish, or can a person become a true Christian without first being a Jew casts a shadow and points an arrow towards today's Church, especially you and me. Many of us stand rigidly on the extreme of the ecclesiastical, social and political spectrum. This situation has existed from the earliest days of the Church (re. Acts 15.) Jesus Himself saw this problem of extremism, but He left it for the apostles and His Church to solve. One thing to recognize is that tensions and prejudice have always created difficult and serious maladies to the Universal principles and nature of the Church. But, can the Church fix the problem? Oh yes!! She has, and always will. The truth is every epoch has left an imprint of its own prejudiced challenges. But the solution is always the same despite the time and the place.

The problem: most Catholics, about 90% believe that their relationship with Christ can only be measured on the level of their feelings. So, they form cliques with their likes, thereby creating destructive divisions. We listen more to our progressive and conservative bases than the voice of Christ and the Church. The result of these postmodern cliques is that the Church grows as universal, but dwarfs in its character and nature as one. The unifying character of the Church is not necessarily her dogmatic approach to issues of life, but her mission of love. Our love for Christ is not manifest in loving our neighbors as ourselves (Lev 19:18) because we are not good

yardsticks to measure God's love. Rather, Jesus Christ Himself is the only measure of God's love. Love of God and of all people, even those who do not belong to this flock, is the only seal on God's children. Granted, the term "love" is overused and seems to have lost its true meaning in most contexts, but when Christ is suffixed to it, then its full meaning is restored. The true meaning of love is that every person is My extension and a true image of God. "A new commandment I give to you. Love one another as I have loved you. By this will they know that you are my disciples. You are My friends if you keep My commandment of love".

So, my beloved, let us break free from our fear, hatred, division and rejection. Let us accept the gentle wind of love flowing from Christ Himself. Christian love is built on forgiveness not on perfection. Go with love. God Bless you.

Pray acts 15 to the end.