

Homily of Sixth Sunday of Easter, Year B

We have in the first reading, "While Peter was speaking . . . , the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the word." Peter and his companions "were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit should have been poured out on Gentiles also, for they could hear them speaking in tongues and glorifying God." In the second reading, we read, "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love." And in the Gospel, Jesus says, "This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you. No greater love than this, to lay down one's life for his friends."

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit moves us to sing praises and glorify God. This effect is clearly stated in the first reading. However, the effects of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit go beyond singing praises and glorifying God. Praising and glorifying God are supposed to translate into action, otherwise it becomes what St. Paul calls "a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal" (1 Corinthians 13:1). We often say that action speaks louder than words. St. James says, "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:14). That is why the second reading and the Gospel show us that love of one another is the greatest effect of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is incomplete if it does not translate into love of one another.

Jesus states in the Gospel, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." That is what Jesus did for us and asks us to follow his example. The story of Fr. Maximillian Kolbe comes to mind. He was arrested in 1941 by the Nazis in Poland and was sent to Auschwitz prison. A prisoner escaped, and the commandant announced that ten men were to be executed as a result. As the ten men were being marched to be executed, Fr. Maximillian did what no prisoner dared to do. He stepped out from the line and said to the commandant, "I would like to take that man's place. He has a wife and children." The commandant asked Fr. Maximillian, "Who are you?" Fr. Maximillian replied, "A priest." The commandant ordered Fr. Maximillian to take the man's place and was executed.

Another saint, Fr. Damien, of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary came to Hawaii from Belgium in 1864. In 1873 he became a member of the team that assisted in Molokai leper colony. It was supposed to be an assignment of three months in every three years, but Fr. Damien volunteered to remain permanently, serving and caring the lepers' physical, medical and spiritual needs. Also, he became their advocate to the Hawaiian government. Unfortunately, Fr. Damien contracted Hansen's disease and died of its complications.

The stories of Fr. Maximillian and Fr. Damien are a challenge to each one of us.

None of us may have the same experience of supreme sacrifice as Fr. Maximillian and Fr. Damien. However, we have daily opportunities to deny ourselves comforts and pleasures to benefit someone in need. The real blindness is when one cannot see who to help or where to help. And the real paralysis is inability to rise from one's comfort zone to help those in need.

Thank you for your many sacrifices to St. Francis Parish and School. Thank God for the good weather we had last Sunday and thank you for the successful Crawfish Festival by which you are restoring the hope of many people concerning the future of our parish and school. My special thanks to the planning and execution team and all volunteers. The parish's subsidy to St. Francis of Assisi School was \$20,000 annually. The subsidy is doubled from this school year. Your effort to keep St. Francis School open is not because parishioners' children are students in it, but because it is your own continual contribution to African American Education Apostolate, whether the students are Christians or not, and whether they are Catholics or not. This is a huge sacrifice. The easy way out is to get rid of the school and have peace; then, we come to Mass and sing praises and glorify God. How do we stand before posterity and God on the day of judgement? St. John of the Cross says, "In the evening of our life, we will be judged by love."

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