

## Homily of Sixth Sunday of Easter Year B, 2021

Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48; Psalm 98:1-4; 1 John 4:7-10; John 15:9-17

Many Jewish Christian converts of the early Christian community believed that non-Jews and Gentiles were unworthy of becoming Christians. They lost sight of the fact that Gentiles were among the followers of Jesus when he was alive. The apostle, Simon the Zealot (the zealous one), was a Canaanite. Matthew 15:21-28 tells us about the faith of the Canaanite woman, and the faith of the Centurion in Matthew 8:5-13. Then, Chapter 10 of the Acts of the Apostles begins with the vision of Cornelius (a centurion), and the vision of St. Peter. The visions reveal the inclusive nature of Christianity.

The visions played out when Peter arrived at Cornelius' house. "Then Peter proceeded to speak and said, 'In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him.' While Peter was still speaking these things, the holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the word. The circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter were astounded that the gift of the holy Spirit should have been poured out on the Gentiles also, for they could hear them speaking in tongues and glorifying God" (Acts 10:34-35, 44-46).

This is a painful reminder of past and present partiality, exclusive, and discriminatory mentalities, laws and regulations in religious and civil circles across the world. St. Peter made a powerful statement while addressing the people, "You know that it is unlawful for a Jewish man to associate with, or visit, a Gentile, but God has shown me that I should not call any person profane or unclean" (Acts 10:28). He continues, as we see in today's reading, "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34-35).

The first reading begins with the following words, "When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and, falling at his feet, paid him homage. Peter, however, raised him up, saying, "Get up. I myself am also a human being" (Acts 10:25-26). St. Peter's humility is a challenge to those who arrogate themselves to 'golden calves' and demand others to 'worship' them.

Unfortunately, too, we discharge these unholy attitudes of partiality, exclusion, and discrimination on one another in our homes, groups, churches, communities, neighborhoods, places of work, gatherings, institutions, organizations, and so on. The way out of these sins is for us to see one another with eyes of love. For this reason, St. John writes to us in the second reading, "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" (1 John 4:7-8).

The admonition continues in the gospel reading. Jesus says to us, "As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. ... This is the commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:9 and 12-13). We have many great examples of people who have made or make various degrees of sacrifices for love of God and human beings.

To conclude, let us call to mind the words of St. Peter, "God has shown me that I should not call any person profane or unclean." Therefore, let us not demean anyone or people, or see anyone or group as second-rate or third-rate. Let us see each other with the eyes of love, and break down barriers and barricades of partiality, exclusion, and discrimination. By so doing, we are able to accept one another, live in peace with one another, work with one another, build up one another, give one another equal opportunity, and celebrate one another and with one another. When we say that all men and women are created equal, and that all men and women are endowed by God with equal rights, let us match up these words with sincere actions. So help us God. Amen.

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