

## Homily of Sixth Sunday of Easter, Year B, 2024

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

Chapter 10 of the Acts of the Apostles contains God's directives that the Good News be preached to non-Jews, the Gentiles. They were to be baptized and welcomed among the believers. God's directives were through two visions, the vision of Cornelius and the vision of Peter.

Cornelius was a Roman centurion but devout and God-fearing along with his family. His vision was to send for Peter (Acts 10:5-6). Peter's vision was not to call any person profane or unclean (Acts 10:9-16). In the vision, God directed Peter to accompany the centurion's messengers without hesitation.

"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). Peter's humility is a challenge to us when we demand appreciation or respect, or recognition. To be appreciated or recognized or respected gives encouragement and gives a good feeling. But when there is a failure of our expectation, let us not be upset or discouraged. God's appreciation is greater than human's appreciation. His recognition is greater than human's recognition. Whatever we are is by God's grace; not by human thinking! Therefore, let humility and goodwill accompany our gifts and talents.

In Cornelius' house Peter preached, "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). "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation, whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him." There was an immediate effect from Peter's words. "While [he] was still speaking these things, the holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the word." (Acts 10:34-35, 44-46).

The first reading reminds us of the painful past and present atrocities and evils of racism, tribalism, discrimination, slavery, holocaust, ethnic cleaning, genocide, xenophobia, and so on rooted in prejudiced judgement of fellow human beings as 'profane,' 'unworthy,' 'worthless,' 'soul-less,' 'heathen,' 'outcast,' 'less human,' and so on.

Unfortunately, too, sometimes, we discharge unwelcome and biased attitudes 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 that see each person as created by God in his image and likeness (Genesis 1:27). 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" (John 15:9). "This is the commandment: love one another as I love you" (John 15:12). Jesus repeats, "This I command you: love one another" (John 15:17).

Jesus uses himself as an example. "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13). St. Paul tells us that love does not seek its own interests (1 Corinthians 13:5). Love without sacrifice is like a balloon. It does not endure. May God bless people of goodwill who have made or make various degrees of sacrifices for love of God and human beings.

We hear it often said that love is blind. The saying, in a positive way, means the love that does not discriminate; the love that treats everyone impartially. It is the love that is color blind, status blind, and blind to leanings and inclinations. St. Paul writes, "Let your love be genuine; ... love one another with mutual affection ..." (Romans 12:9-10).

Let us conclude with this story:

A rabbi once asked his pupils how they could tell when the night had ended and the day had returned. "Could it be," asked one student, "when you see an animal in the distance and tell whether it is a sheep or a dog?" "No," answered the rabbi. "Could it be," asked another student, "when you can look at a tree in the distance, and you can tell whether it is a fig tree or a peach tree?" "No," replied the rabbi. "Well, when is it then" demanded his students. The rabbi replied, "It is when you look at the face of any man or woman and see that he or she is your brother or sister. If you cannot see that, then no matter what time it is, it is still night!"

Fr. Martin Eke, MSP