

Homily 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter Cycle B: 2024: Acts 10: 25-26, 34-35, 44-48; Ps 98; 1 Jn 4:7-10; Jn 15: 9-17

***“God’s Love for Us and Our Response in a Hostile/Indifferent Culture”***

As St. John notes in the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading today, *“In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins.”* To love truly is to will the good of another. What amazing love God has for us! He could have just let us be lost in our sins and eventually in death, but instead He came down to earth to save us from the power of satan, sin and eternal death. This is the **Good News** of our Catholic Faith! Jesus, the eternal Son of God, came to lay down His life for us; are we willing to lay down our lives for Him? Do we realize the full implications of this? What is our response to Him?

1. **We live in a world that sells God’s love short.** St. Paul says in the later days there will be widespread confusion about the Truth and many will prefer fables and myths over the Truth of God (see 2 Timothy chap 3). **Are we in the final days before Jesus returns?** Maybe yes, maybe no. But we do have many books/ movies/ TV shows/documentaries today *which deny that Jesus is God, that Jesus is just a good guy, or maybe not even that: He could be some self-deluded fool who thinks He is God; that all the teachings of the Catholic Church are made up, and that the Vatican is corrupt and just looking to maintain power.* Yes, many of them claim to be “fiction”, but there is usually an **agenda** behind them of calling into question all that we hold dear as Catholics. These works, of which all of us come across at some point, can plant **doubts** in our minds, especially in the young whose faith is not fully developed. The thought may cross our minds: *maybe it is true what these unbelievers say in their books and movies and television shows?* **All this confusion about the origins of our Catholic Faith only occurs if we lose sight of the true nature of God’s love and fail to daily pray for an increase in the supernatural virtue of Faith** which is not just a pious wish, but the spiritual gift, according to the Letter to the Hebrews chapter 11: 1, that connects us directly to God, *“Faith is confident assurance concerning the things we hope for, and conviction about things we do not see.”* Also to grow in the virtue of Faith we must to be willing to continue to study our Catholic Faith in a

serious way as well. Take advantage of our well-stocked **Lending Library**. Many people in the modern world, including some Catholics, like to read works that attack the Catholic Church as they are “interesting”, but at the same time never crack open the Bible or the Catechism of the Catholic Church? **Is this being intellectually honest - making no effort to find out the truth of what the Catholic Church really teaches and why?** In reality, what the Catholic Church teaches is not something made up by clever human beings “back in the day”, but **the gift of the Deposit of Faith** given by God Himself in the person of Jesus Christ and guided and protected by the Holy Spirit through the teaching authority of the Church (the Sacred Magisterium) to lead mankind into all Truth down to our present day and continuing until Jesus returns in glory. **That is the real deal!**

2. **Is God’s love for us too good to be true?** Many people today think so – a sign that the Faith has grown weak. Jesus couldn’t really be God. God can’t love the human race that much to actually take on human nature and a human body and mind and heart, thru our Blessed Mother by the power of the Holy Spirit in the Incarnation, and be willing to suffer and die to save us from our sins. *Jesus didn’t really rise from the dead, so that we too could someday rise from the dead - that is too good to be true! He doesn’t really give us His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Holy Eucharist; it is just a symbol of the Last Supper, right? He doesn’t love us that much to feed us with Himself in Holy Communion - every day if we so choose at Mass - that would be too loving, making Himself too vulnerable. Does Jesus love us that much to remain with us in all the Tabernacles throughout the world? No, that can’t be. Does God actually forgive our sins in the Sacrament of Confession? No that is too good to be true, using some weak priest to forgive the most heinous of sins; that is crazy; it can’t be, it’s a dream, not reality!* **This thinking, which is shown in the fake news that pervades our culture in so many ways, is all a reflection of a deep spiritual despair and malaise that many modern people suffer from, including some Catholics, putting limits on God’s love – if they believe at all.** Yet at the same time the human soul longs for God, as we were made for Him, and so many of the same modern people crave

some kind of “spirituality”, but often one that will not make serious moral and spiritual demands on them. You hear it so often, maybe even in our own families, “*I’m spiritual, I’m a good person, so I don’t need to go to Mass or Confession.*” Really?! The Catholic faith in all its dimensions is seen as being too demanding, especially morally, and so people settle for something a bit easier on the human level. **This vague spirituality** which sometimes leads to occult practices/ New Age or Eastern religions can sometimes have some of the intrigue of religion and mystery without the conversion of life the Gospel and the Catholic Faith calls us to in a radical way. **In this worldview Jesus is made into our fallen image; instead of us being molded into the true image of Jesus in holiness of life.** **Which way are we going to go long term?** Are we going to allow God to prune us spiritually, so we bear good spiritual fruit and be molded into the image of Jesus, or are we going to reduce Jesus to our own fallen nature? The choice is ours and our eternal destiny depends on it - whether we realize it right now or not.

3. **It all goes back to love, true love.** Do we really love God in return for His love for us? His love is not too good to be true! Let’s not put limits on God’s love for us! **Charity must be at the center of our lives:** *love of God and love for our neighbor.* **How do we treat others in daily life?** *Do we try to look for the good and try to put ourselves in their shoes, especially if they are struggling with something? Or do we assume the worst and slander and gossip about them, especially today with social media and the internet at our fingertips: to just go on and blast away and assassinate the character of every person we disagree with, with seemingly no consequences for that slander? But God sees it.* As Pope Francis said in his **Apostolic letter on Holiness** back in 2018, *those who slander others on the internet will answer to God* – even though people think there are no repercussions for that. In contrast to that evil quality, may we instead be filled with the gift of God’s love, today and always, and bear witness to that love by all that we say, and think, and do. Try to give others the benefit of the doubt and help and pray for them. It’s not easy to do, but it’s worth it – the narrow path leading to Heaven by God’s grace in the power of the Holy Spirit. God bless you. †