

Homily for the 6th Sunday of Easter

Poetry usually isn't my thing, but I'd like to begin this morning with part of a poem written by a friend of mine. It's entitled *Holy Love*, and in a special way, I think it really speaks to the love of our Blessed Mother Mary, who was a vessel and a channel of God's divine love. "Holy love is never lusterless. Its Light will illumine all darkness. Radiating peace, transcends ego. Inflamed by the Fire of God's Love. Purified like gold in His furnace. No will unsubmitted to "Fiat!" No mantle worn warmer than Mary's – Woven Virginal wool from the Lamb. Pure love calls all out of the darkness – At first Light of new springtime's dawning – As the time for His coming draws near."

Love. Today our Scripture readings are filled with references to divine love. And in a very focused way, we hear in the second reading from the 1st Letter of St. John: "In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins." This got me thinking about the real nature of love. And what this means is that love doesn't begin with us. Rather, love begins with God. "In this is love", the Scripture says, "not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins." Love begins with God, because God is in fact love. And because He is love, which doesn't stay locked in a box or hidden away, that love came down to us and took on flesh to save us from our sins.

What this means, then, as St. John shows us, is exactly what God's love consists of: sacrifice – as revealed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. And those who seek to love in this way – that is, sacrificing for others – love most like God, because God must dwell within them to be able to love in such a selfless way in the first place. And, in turn, they are then dwelling in God, because they are living in divine love. “Laying down one's life for one's friend”, Jesus once put it, is the greatest love there is.

Certainly, Mary, the mother of Jesus, loved in such a way – imitating the divine example set before her in her son. She said “yes” to God's will, and laid her own plans to the side. She said “yes” to what God wanted, and chose the better part. That ‘fiat’ or “yes” was first uttered at the Annunciation, when the Archangel Gabriel revealed to her God's plan for her to be the mother of the Savior. But at the same time this one “yes”, this humble surrender, became a pattern of a lifetime of yesses – a journey of love, a perfect example of the vocation of every human person to bear the fruit of surrendered love.

In other words, Mary shows us what it means to love like God loves. On her own, I don't know how she could have ever endured the challenges that lay before her: to raise this child, unlike any other; to see Him suffer and die before her very eyes; to hope beyond hope that the grave was not the end. But, Mary's love was not her own – it's was God's love living in her. Because He loved her first and she knew that love personally, she was able to answer “yes” each time God asked of her something that just seemed beyond human ability.

In a similar way, I believe that the love of all mothers is also a participation in God's divine love. Just as Mary laid aside her will to serve her heavenly Father, and assumed the vocation of caring for and raising her divine Son, so our mothers have also made many sacrifices out of love for us to care for us and raise us, their sons and daughters. True motherhood is a whole-hearted response to God's divine love, which has embraced these mothers first; and then, in turn, initiates a love, which embraced us first, before we even knew what love was. As children, both of our earthly parents and of God, we are called to respond to that love, and then participate ourselves in that first love of God, which lays self to the side and seeks the true good of the other.

As our heavenly mother watches over us from heaven, she wants to always lead us to Jesus, her Son, because love begets love. Her response to God's divine love led her to give birth to Love Incarnate. And continuing her motherly role from above, Mary still seeks for that divine love to be begotten in each one of us, so that we in turn, can give birth to true love in our lives for all the world to know. God bless you.