

6th Sunday of Easter

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As coincidence, or providence would have it, today as we celebrate Mother's Day, all three of our Easter season readings focus on love. On this day, we salute our moms, living and dead, and that unbroken chain of strong, determined, fearless women going back to Eve, who have loved us, each and all of us, into being who we are. We salute them, and wonder at their generosity. We marvel at their courage, and find inspiration in their steadfastness. Doves whose soft breasts we snuggled into, they are also fierce lionesses who protect their young with awesome courage. Long suffering and patient, impatient and demanding, always right and sometimes wrong, they teach us how to love by loving us, as best as they can, with all their limitations and all their graces. So here's to you moms and grandmas, here's to you teachers and nurses who have mothered us, here's to you wise women who shape the world with your loving presence. We remember you, we cherish you even when you make us crazy, and we love you.

More gallons of ink, more tons of toner powder have been spilled over the subject of love than any other topic in human history. It remains our greatest mystery, and our highest calling, though its definition, its true nature always remains just beyond our grasp, just beyond our words to contain or our hearts to enfold.

Love takes so many different forms: the natural affection we feel for the young, the resonance we feel for our native place or country or the very beauty of the world. Love is revealed the friendships that sustain us through hard times, and in the natural and

powerful and confusing chemistry that draws lovers to one another. It is the transforming union that brings two into one and then flowers into new life. It's the long-suffering endurance of the parent who supports a wayward child, who never gives up even they stray. It's the power that keeps us faithful to one another, and causes us to lament when we're not.

Where does this come from? Our scriptures are clear: it comes from God.

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.

The scriptures don't talk about puppy love, or patriotism, or palling around with your bros or bffs or finding a hookup. They tell us PLAINLY that the one cosmic reality is love, and that Love is the true name and definition of the supreme being who made all things. Love made us its own image and likeness. Love is the very DNA of the Godhead, beyond our imagining: beyond race or gender, beyond clan or nation. Love is who God is, and how God is, beyond our power of speech to define and beyond the power of our imaginations to comprehend.

We have a glimpse, a glimmer of that reality in what each of us has experienced, howsoever incompletely, howsoever imperfectly, in the loves we have experienced: in the care we received as children, in the abiding friendships we have formed, in our dedication to a great idea, or a great work that needs to be done for the good of others, in our union and

communion with a partner. We believe that these are the works of God's spirit, alive and powerfully active in our world, revealing again and again in the outpouring of God's love in our ordinary human hearts, and spurring us on to ever greater generosity.

This sounds so easy, and yet it's so hard: so hard to let go of my ego, so hard to step out of myself and into the shoes or the heart of another, so hard to see the other object of my love and not competition, so hard to say "we" rather than "them." Peter and John had to learn that God's spirit was greater than their beliefs, greater than the limits of their tradition; we constantly need to be reminded that, as St. John tells us, God is always greater than our hearts.

And that's why we come here again and again, to experience that love in word and sacrament. Here we're reminded of the love of God that poured into our broken humanity in Jesus's coming among us, in his living and dying, and in the love of a peasant girl named Mary who welcomed him as her child, and made him brother to us all. Not only brother to us rare few, the elect, the saved, the beautiful, the strong, the "like mes", but to the "not like mes:" all those the hungry searchers, all those I find it hard to accept, understand, cherish.

We are reminded today that God's love is wider than even a mother's love; even more merciful, enduring, long suffering. And we ask for the Spirit's grace to give our love in return.