

## Homily

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter 5/26/19

“Whoever loves me will keep my word.” There are many words that come from our mouths. Many words that formulate in our minds. How often are they the word of God? How often are they the word of love? For if you speak the Word and if you know the Word, then you are one with the Word.

As we hear in the beginning of John’s Gospel, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. That’s the same Word that spoke creation into being in the beginning, in Genesis. It’s the same Word that we read from today, that same Word that is Jesus Christ, the second person of the Blessed Trinity.

And that, my brothers and sisters, is what unites us. For “If you know my word, and you speak my word, and you live by my word, you will live love. But if you do not know my word, if you do not speak my word, if you do not live by my word, you will not live lives of love.” It’s so much easier to call ourselves Christians than to **be** Christians, but even when it comes to that, sometimes, we struggle in living those lives of love. We struggle in speaking those words of truth. We struggle in speaking those words of love, that God gives to us.

But that doesn’t mean that it’s impossible. Because we know that with God all things truly are possible. But where do we go for our word? What words do we speak? Do we speak words of life or words of death? Do we speak words that unite or words that divide? Because a house that is divided against itself is what? Doomed to fail. Yet you and I both fall into that trap sometimes. We cut each other down. We gossip. We don’t unite each other around the love of God.

That’s the challenge, my brothers and sisters, that God gives to us each and every day: to bring each other together, to build each other up. To not just look at what’s around us, because if we dwell too much on what’s around us it’s easy to see that we don’t live lives of love. It’s easy to see that the word of God, that Word of truth, does not reside in many of our hearts. At least in the majority of our hearts that is.

But yes, because we have been Baptized, most of us have been Confirmed and have received the Eucharist, God does reside within us, and God does want to reside in complete-ness within us. But it's our response to that love that shows whether we want to respond or not. Remember that day that we are called home, because we are each going to be called home, my brothers and sisters, on that day that we are called home, Jesus will meet us face to face. We will meet our creator in God face to face.

And He's not going to look at us with hate, He's not going to look at us with derision, He's not going to look at us negatively. He's going to be standing there as the father does in the story of the Prodigal Son, with His arms wide open. looking to embrace us in His love. But it's at that moment that our response matters the most. Do we run up to Him as the father does in the Prodigal Son story, or do we kind of just say, "I don't have time for this. I'd rather do what I want rather than what I need."

The truth, my brothers and sisters, is that we need the love of God. In reality most of us don't want it. Because to embrace the love of God is not an easy task. To embrace the love of God is to love Him first, neighbor second, self third. The reality though, is we live in a world where we love ourselves, we tolerate those around us, and we occasionally think of God. Kind of backwards.

No that's not all of us, but that's the majority of human civilization, especially in America today. Because the almighty dollar runs our lives. The almighty I AM we have replaced with the almighty "I." When God says "I AM," we think, "No, I am! I am god, I am in charge, I am, I am, I am!" Not He is. And we wonder why we live in such a disordered world. We wonder why horrible things happen in the world.

Last night I was driving home after Mass, and I saw flashy lights, and there were about 10-15 cars with their flashing lights on, and the first thing that came to my mind was, "Oh, another shooting." It wasn't "Oh, is someone hurt, is it a hospital thing?" It was oh, no, another shooting. Twenty minutes later I turn on the news, and what do you know, it was another shooting. We've lost the love of God, my brothers and sisters. In the sense that He continues to love us, we though, have set His love aside. Because we're more focused on what is important to me than what is important to us.

What is important to us is that we are members of the Body of Christ. We are brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, by adoption, to God. We hear the “son and daughter” part the same way that we hear it with our parents. That means that we can be unruly and disordered, right? We get to rebel!

But we see what happens time and time again to the Israelites in the desert when they rebel. They then have to repent. God loves them. So He offers them that forgiveness, but then they allow pride to take over again.

In the midst of “pride” is the letter “I”. Because it’s all about me. It is all about the mighty ME. But when we focus just on ourselves, we aren’t living in love. Because love by definition cannot be held within, it must be shared. So until we choose to change that “I” to “we,” we’re going to be struggling, we’re going to be in pain.

Now that’s not to say that once we change that I to “we” that we won’t be in pain, we’ll just be able to manage it better. There will still be obstacles, there will still be stumbling blocks put in front of us when we come together as the Body of Christ. But it’s how we manage through them how we go through them that shows the difference of a heart converted by the love of God.

As I mentioned before, in these last 30 years, these last almost 34 years of my short life, I’ve seen ups and downs in society, and in my own life. What I’ve realized though, and I believe is true, not just because of my experiences, but because of all those that have been told to me as well, is that a life that embraces God’s love, can bear any tragedy, can bear any obstacle. I think this last week, in the hearts of Oklahomans, we’re trying to embrace God’s love because we’re in fear.

We’re afraid of tornadoes, we’re afraid of flooding, we’re afraid of hail, we’re afraid of all of these potential damaging things. The irony though, is that for most of us our fear isn’t in our own lives we fear for, but for where we have placed our treasure. I don’t want to lose my home, I don’t want to lose my car, I don’t want to lose my crops, I don’t want to lose my ‘fill-in-the-blank.’ That’s where our fear lies. Which means that’s where our priorities lie.

After that tornado hit our house six years ago, it was a horrible day. it was horrible when we lost our house And for any of you who have lost a house, I know

that that's how you feeling inside, or that's how you have felt in side. But what brought ne back to reality was that not only my family came together, but the town of Moore, the city of Oklahoma City, the world united around our tragedy. The Pope prayed for Moore, Oklahoma! Doesn't happen too often, except for every ninth year in Oklahoma.

The reality is, that when we have these tragedies, and we have the love of God in the forefront of our lives, in the forefront of our lives, we can unite and lift each other up. That's what I'm talking about. But why does it take tragedies to get us there? Why can't we just do it out of the goodness of our hearts? And that my brothers and sisters is what I'm calling us to do today, because Christ calls us to do it first.

As Jesus says in today's Gospel, "It's not Me, but the Father who sent Me." Through my ordination, God has called me to be a shepherd for this community. And sometimes I need to speak hard truths. And the hard truth is we aren't there yet. The hard truth is we all still have work to do. I still have work to do, so much work to do, on myself.

But if I focus so much on myself that I forget the community, then I'm focusing on that "I" in pride, instead of the "I's" in "humility." There are two I's in humility. Where there are two I's there is a "we." One I of pride, two I's of humility. When we come together as a Body of Christ, we are doing so putting God first. And loving our neighbor.

So my brothers and sisters, what is that God is calling you to today? How is He calling your heart to embrace His love, to share His love? My only request from you today would be to listen to Him, to honor Him, and in humility follow what he's calling you to do.