

Homily 5-17-09
Sixth Sunday of Easter Year B
Acts 10:25-26,34-35,44-48
1 John 4:7-10
John 15:9-17
Deacon Bob Corsaro

Last Saturday I was in Cleveland Ohio officiating at my nephews wedding.

On Sunday, while sitting in a pew, immediately following communion, I opened The Sunday missal and began to read and reflect on that days Gospel... the vine and the branches.

Little did I know something wonderful was to take place... ..

Jesus said, "I am the vine and my father is the vine grower... you are the branches, he prunes the fruit bearing branches so that they may grow more fruit."

"You are already pruned because of the words I have spoken to you so REMAIN in me as I REMAIN in you."

We are to stay with him as branches on the vine.

What a lovely metaphor!

So I turned a few pages to sneak a peek at this weekend's gospel.

Thinking of you, I was searching for words or a message that I might share with you today.

Suddenly, I felt a strong presence of the Holy Spirit. The words of the passage jumped out at me as I read and reflected on the following:

Jesus reminds us again to remain in him... in his love.

How difficult this can be at times, with everything going on in our lives! Job worries, investment worries, grades, peer pressure.

We need to allow the words of Jesus to sink in! Our faith needs to hear this!

He wants us to share in his joy, to carry his joy within us!

Remember where Jesus was when he offered his joy to his disciples?

He made this offering at the last supper, really just moments before his betrayal and his death.

How could he be talking about joy, with torture and death right around the corner?

Is it possible that maybe Jesus knew complete joy at the moment because he was about to give himself, **empty himself** completely for his friends?

His act of supreme sacrificial love, would ultimately prove to be a source of perfect joy.

“Remain in my love” he says. ...this is a self sacrificing love, a love which seeks not one’s own happiness, but the happiness of others.

Jesus’ love was unconditional and sacrificial... wholly directed to the good of others.

He gave the best that he had and all that he had.

In the Old Testament, the relationship between God and his people was based upon law.

It was a relationship between master and slave.

Jesus said “ I no longer call you slaves!”
Now our relationship with God is based upon love.

Instead of obeying his commandment, like a slave out of fear, we are now called to obey out of love, to love one another as he loves us.

We become the hands of Christ for others... as we mirror Christ's image of loving obedience.

In doing so, we answer Jesus' summons to us to enter into friendship with him.

He has chosen us to bear fruit in his name. Fruit of the true vine.

Jesus spoke these words of love and joy to his disciples at the table of the last supper.

He continues to call us to his supper.

Over the last couple of weeks we were reminded of this as we witness Jesus calling close to 100 children in our to his supper, to receive the sacrament of Holy Communion for the 1st time.

A communion of love, friendship and thanksgiving.

Jesus encouraged his followers to let the children come to him, and their mom and dads, sisters and brothers, religious ed teachers, family and you did exactly that.

We brought the children to Jesus.

In this parish, it is said by many that, our teens are bringing their parents to Jesus. How awesome is that?

Yes, we are all called to a communion of love and friendship with Jesus and one another

We love one another when we live for one another- seeking the good of our brothers and sisters before our own satisfaction.

We love one another when we pour out our lives, giving generously of our time talent and treasure, in order to serve others in need, in crisis, alone and afraid.

Yesterday morning I attended a retreat for our parish Stephen Ministers.

Stephens ministers are folks just like yourselves, members of our community, who have answered a calling to walk with persons who are suffering through a crisis.

It seems that most have been called to ministry having suffered through a crisis themselves.

It became very evident to me, that these folks have set aside valuable time to offer love to others.

I thought about today's gospel message...we love one another when we lay down our lives for our friends.... Does this mean the Lord will call us to die for our brothers and sisters?

No, but you know we are all called to die to ourselves....to put to death our selfish desires so that we might give of ourselves to God and to others.

All of this self sacrifice may seem a bit counter-cultural, a bit difficult to understand But, In doing this, I believe we will find joy...The joy of Jesus that lies within us all.

Jesus wants to make our joy complete with the love that only he can give.

May your hearts be transformed by his love, and filled with his perfect joy.