

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

The first reading speaks about Peter's encounter with Cornelius, a Roman centurion and a "God-fearer".

It all started when an angel of God appeared to Cornelius and instructed him to invite Peter to his house. And it was God who instructed Peter in a vision to overcome what would prevent him from meeting Cornelius.

When Peter was met by Cornelius, he fell at Peter's feet in homage. Peter immediately raised him up and said that he also was only a human being.

Then Peter helped him and his household to understand better their religious faith by preaching to them Christ's life, death and resurrection.

It was also the Holy Spirit who first, I will say, made them Christians before Peter baptized them.

What I would like to bring out in this story is that it was all about the love of God that made Cornelius and his household become Christians. And God's love extends to all people, not just our own kind.

God just used Peter to reveal his love to Cornelius and his family. Peter was not the source of their faith. It was God who was the source of their faith.

The very fact that we are Christians; we have come to know Jesus is a gift of divine love. Faith, by which we come to know Jesus, is free gift of divine love.

Our faith is basically a relationship with Jesus Christ. So Jesus has to become central to our life and faith.

The Church and her ministers are instruments God is using to help us deepen our faith and relationship with Jesus Christ.

For Jesus to become central to our life and faith, Jesus, in today's gospel reading wants us to establish a relationship of friendship with him. **"You are my friends if you do what I command."**

What does he command? He commands us to love one another.

Friends do good things for each other because of the friendly affection between them. We are to love one another because this is what Jesus, our friend, has done for us and asks of us.

We love but often we love only when it is easy. Jesus asks us to love when it is hard also as he did.

That is, Jesus is calling for a love that shows itself in drastic action and sacrifice, even to the point of laying down our life for a friend.

At times it may appear to us that to do good to certain people is a waste of time. People are often ungrateful and on occasion those to whom we have done good turn against us and this hurts us.

The hurt and resentment often prevent us from loving them.

To love when it is hard to do so we need to remain in the Lord through prayer and sacraments. Our friendship, communion with Jesus enables us to produce works of love.

The second reading tells us that God is love and he is the source and goal of life and love. And that the divine initiative in loving us is the foundation of our love for one another.

Let us remember that when we experience love, we experience God. When we love others, we reveal God to them.