

OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA WEYMOUTH
HOMILY FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (B)
13TH MAY 2012

Acts 10.25-26; 34-35; 44-48.
 Ps 97 (98)
 1 John 4.7-10
 John 15. 9-17

Here is a partly filled cup of water.

Is this cup half empty or half full – In our Gospel today Jesus talks about being in his love and says (v 11)

“I have said these things so that your joy may be complete”.

We’ll be more specific later on, but let’s definitely not aim for half empty; let’s go for the full, complete joy that Jesus offers.

Our opening prayer links to this theme of complete joy. The new translation isn’t quite as catchy as the words you have in your books, so with apologies to anyone reading from their own new missal I have used the words in the books we are still using.

Help us to celebrate our joy in the resurrection of the Lord, and to express in our lives the love we celebrate.....We’re an Easter people, that is we live in the experience of Jesus risen. Yes, at times we will experience sadness and pain – as we said a few weeks ago love involves pain. But we are asking God to help us celebrate everything about Jesus’ resurrection, and to express this in our lives.

May I remind you what we were we saying a couple of weeks ago? When people see how we behave, does this make them question why we behave that way? That is to say, do we express in our lives the love we celebrate? Jesus is risen and alive.....imagine your closest friend or loved one rising from the dead, wouldn’t people know something had happened to you? (wow-look at him dancing up the road....). I bet they would, we wouldn’t need to tell anyone, it would be obvious. Joy would radiate from us. Alleluia. Let’s make this prayer personal – Father, help us to celebrate our joy in the resurrection of the Lord.

The 1st reading gives us more reason to be joyful – God has no favourites. What hope we have – anybody who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to him. (Notice the qualification; we must do what is right.)

Cornelius was a Roman centurion, not one of these new Christians / followers of the way as they were called then, yet the Holy Spirit sent Peter to him and came down on everyone who was listening. Many of these would have been considered unbelievers but this doesn't mean we forget about being a Christian or treat all faiths the same, that would be to take this out of context, but it does offer hope for everyone. The Holy Spirit is a free gift who can come upon anyone....How fortunate we are if we have been baptised, because we are certain we have received the Holy Spirit. So let's express in our lives the love (Holy Spirit) we celebrate.

One of the signs that occurred when the Holy Spirit came down on all the listeners was that they started proclaiming God's greatness and praying in tongues. Now, this doesn't mean we have to pray in tongues, which happens in this reading but we should recognise that this was one of the results that followed the Holy Spirit being received by the pagans who were listening to Peter. It was common in the early Church. For many Roman Catholics, praying in tongues is misunderstood – it's often looked at with suspicion. Whilst it definitely isn't essential, it is a neglected blessing that it is available to everyone, and it can be truly helpful to us. (If you have questions about this, please ask me) But importantly, if we do allow the Holy Spirit freedom to work in us, in one way or another we will, like those listeners with Cornelius, find ourselves proclaiming/telling others how great God is.

In the 2nd reading – again, as a few weeks ago we are reminded it's not by our works but it is the sacrifice of Jesus that takes our sins away. We have life through him. And John tells us this life is one of love. Indeed v7-8 and v16 love is a characteristic of children of God (it distinguishes the person who *knows* God from one who doesn't) We claim to know God....so.....let's celebrate our joy in the resurrection of the Lord and express in our lives the love we celebrate.

We should recall this love is a deep, tender unchanging love. It involves self-denials, work, and sacrifices to secure others welfare. This love must be reflected in our behaviour. It's perhaps interesting, that today there are Catholics (and other Christians) who are very good at observing the rules and practices of the church, but they stop there. Some people have ended up following regulations, but haven't caught the message. When fire takes hold, it jumps around and spreads. God's love is a fire in our hearts – if we have it, we will express it in our lives. So if we don't express it, have we really got it? Perhaps we are simply following the rules, (but aren't really responding to this love.....)

It's told that St Jerome in his old age was carried to the assembly of believers and they had got tired of hearing him say “little children love one another”. They asked him why he kept on at this

and he replied “Because it is the Lord’s command, and observing this alone is sufficient”. (See v12 ‘love one another as I have loved you’.)

And the whole gospel is a wonderful exposition on love, in which Jesus tells us (v 10) that when we keep his commandments (just as on week 2 of Easter) we will remain in God’s love. Sound good? Well it get’s better because then Jesus tells us that the result of this will be “my joy will be in you and your joy complete!”

When Jesus says my joy—this expression probably denotes the happiness which Jesus had, and would continue to have, by the disciples’ obedience, love, and fidelity. In other words, their obedience was to him a source of joy. We are called / invited to do the same. Jesus doesn’t depend on our obedience for his happiness, but it is a source of joy to him. (Parents in particular should recall how good it makes / made them feel when their children do as they are asked)

Your joy be complete – We regularly hear of the joy of the apostles and Jesus is telling us we will have this joy when we remain with him. We will experience joy that we can’t contain. We will be sustained when we have trials and problems. How? Through our love for each other when it is acted out in how we live.

To sum up: Jesus offers us complete joy. To have this we must remain in his love. We stay in his love when we do as he asks us, and I suggest that we will know this is happening when we can’t keep it to ourselves – when we live our opening prayer and we celebrate our joy in the resurrection of the Lord, and express in our lives the love we celebrate.

Rev Jonathan de Kretser