



Blessed Sacrament Parish
Homily by Deacon Terry Ellerman
May 6, 2018 Sixth Sunday of Easter

Reading I Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

Psalm 98:1-4

Reading II 1 John 4:7-10

Gospel John 15:9-17

Homily

Our readings today talk to us today about the miracle of love. What is love? In our world today we throw it around a lot. Sometimes it means a lot, and sometimes it means nothing. But if you look at our first reading today from the Acts of the Apostles we hear that they are told that Jesus came to save everyone, not just the Hebrews and the Israelites as was believed, but for everyone. Then in our second reading and our Gospel, we hear about what love really is.

First of all by definition — God is love. We are created out of love by God so that we, too, can go and love. He says in the Gospel today, “Just as I have kept by Father’s commandments and remain in his love, we too must be in his love and follow his commandments. We need to love one another.” So what is love? Love is self-sacrificing. Love is taking care of each other. Love is paying attention to one another. Love is putting another person before ourselves.

I have a story that took place in the 1950s in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and in a hospital there a little boy was born. He was born premature with all sorts of difficulties. Because of his difficulties his eyes were removed and he was blind, he had cerebral palsy, his intellectual ability was very limited, he was not a child who responded to anything. After the birth mother and the father left the hospital they decided they did not want to take the baby home. So the hospital had a dilemma, what were they going to do? They thought about it and came up with the name of a woman by the name of May Lemke. May was in her fifties and had already raised five children and they called her and said, “We have a baby who really needs some love. A baby who really needs some help. They told her what the difficulties were and said that the baby would probably not live very long.

So, May came in and said, “Yes. Absolutely. I am going to adopt this baby and the baby is going to live a long time. So she took him home, named him Wesley, and she took care of him, bathed him, read him stories every day and prayed over him every day. As time went on she would cry over him because every day he grew, but did not make any advancing. He was not responsive in any way. When she fed him she had to tie him in a chair so that he did not fall over. It wasn’t until the age of 16 that he could stand on his own, still he could not walk, and verbally there was nothing.

Every day she prayed, every day she gave him all the attention that she could. Then one day she placed a package on the table and she noticed that he could use his fingers and began pricking the string and she thought, "I wonder what that's all about?" She thought maybe music is something he might be interested in, so she went out and got all types of different music and played it all the time for him. Eventually she and her husband bought a used piano and put it in his bedroom. She took him over to the bench and put his hand on the piano and pushed his finger but again, he was not responsive. He did nothing.

So, people said, "You really should not keep him at home and he should be in another place." And she said, "No, no, no. This is my child and I am going to love him, and I am going to give him everything that he needs." One day when the boy was about twenty, she and her husband were in bed and all of a sudden they heard this noise, this music coming and she said, "Did you leave the TV or radio on?" And he said, "No, I don't think so." They went into the bedroom and there he was, Leslie, sitting at the piano playing Tsychovlsky's "Piano Concerto No. 1." Perfectly. No mistakes. It was perfect.

The first thing that she did was get on her knees and said, "Thank you, God." As time went on he became a little more verbal. The one thing that he had a gift for was music. All he had to do was hear a song once and he could play it perfectly — almost like Steve but not quite. But he could play music he heard perfectly and as time went on he could even improvise from that. Someone said to her, "How can that be?" She said, "I don't know. It is just a gift from God that was given to him. The only thing I do know is, hopefully I have been the vehicle over the last 20 years to help that gift come out."

Isn't that what love is about? Isn't love about sharing and caring. Isn't it about Amelia and her sister here, about the love in which she came into this world, and the love that her parents and grandparents and family have for her. Isn't it the same feeling we have for our own children and foster the gifts that they have. That is why we have in our schools music and sports and all these things. What is it that will trigger the gift in each person that will bring out the most love in the world?

Love brings joy, but between love and joy is a heck of a lot hard work. It is a heck of a lot of self-sacrifice, a heck of a lot of putting that person before our self. We all know that if we use the love that God gives us, the end result is joy and a connectedness with Jesus. The story really demonstrates the power of God's love, and shows a way to work miracles in our own time. Through love — God has put at our disposal the greatest power there is in the world. It is a power that all the money in the world cannot give, all the knowledge in the world does not give, all the leaders in the world do not possess. Love is a power that all the armies of the world can not muster. Love is a power that every human being has and it doesn't make any difference the sex or the religion, the educational background or nationality. Love is not reserved for the healthy, the wealthy, the wise or famous.

Love is for everyone. Love is the one thing that makes us all equal before God, and all of us equal before each other. That is why the sisters would say, "You've got to love everybody. You don't have to like what they do, but you have to love them because each person was created by God.

This is the good news that can transform the world and we need to shout it from the rooftops. And if we do, we will be able to work miracles through love in our lives, just as Jesus worked miracles in his own life. So the question for you and me today is: God is love and the more we abide in him the more we abide in love, and the more we love one another the more connected we become with him. Are we loving people most of the time? And are we people who are willing to accept the love of each other most of the time? Because the miracle in our world is the love that God has given each one of us so that we can use it to make this world a better place.

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