Sixth Sunday of Easter (B)

Gospel text (*Jn* 15:9-17): Jesus said to his disciples: "As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: love one another."

"I have called you friends"

Fr. Francesc CATARINEU i Vilageliu
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Today we celebrate the last Sunday before the solemnities of the Ascension and Pentecost, which close the Easter season. Throughout these Sundays, the risen Jesus has revealed himself as the Good Shepherd and the vine to which we must be connected as branches, and today he opens his Heart to us completely.

Certainly, in His Heart we can only find love. What constitutes the deepest mystery of God is that He is Love. Everything He has done from creation to redemption has been out of love. All that He expects from us in response to His actions is just love. Therefore, His words resonate today: "Remain in my love" (Jn 15:9). Love asks for reciprocity; it is like a dialogue that makes us respond with increasing love to His initial love.

A fruit of love is joy: "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you" (Jn 15:11). If our life does not reflect the joy of believing, if we let ourselves be overwhelmed by adversities without seeing that the Lord is also there present and comforting us, it is because we do not know Jesus sufficiently well.

God always takes the initiative. He explicitly tells us by saying, "I chose you" (Jn 15:16). We might be tempted to think that we have chosen Him, but we have done nothing more than respond to a call. He has chosen us freely to be his friends: "I no longer call you slaves...; I have called you friends" (Jn 15:15).

In the beginning, God spoke to Adam as a friend speaks to his friend. Christ, the new Adam, has not only restored that friendship but also intimacy with God, since God is Love.

Everything boils down to this word: “Love.” Saint Augustine reminds us: "The good Master recommends us quite often that charity is the only possible commandment. Without charity all the other good qualities mean nothing. Charity, in fact, leads man necessarily to all the other virtues that make him good."

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Let us seek to be like Christ, because Christ also became like us: to become gods through him since he himself, through us, became a man. He took the worst upon himself to make us a gift of the best.” (Saint Gregory Nazianzen)

- “The true fruit is the love that has passed through the Cross, through God’s purifications.” (Benedict XVI)

- “By loving one another, the disciples imitate the love of Jesus which they themselves receive. Whence Jesus says: ‘As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love’ (Jn 15:9) and again: ‘This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you’ (Jn 15:12).” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 1823)