

**For The Bulletin of
May 10, 2015**

THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

From Father Robert

The gospel begins with God, not us. It describes in sweeping detail the unparalleled, intimate relationship to which the Father and Jesus invite us: chosen by them, given a share in their joy, called friends by Them, told everything by Them, appointed by Them to bear fruit, and given whatever we ask in Jesus' name. In response, we are to incarnate this divine-human relationship in our relationships with each other: "love one another as I love you." God's love is so freely and lavishly given. In turn, we are to empty ourselves and give that love to those we meet. We are not to love on our terms; we are to love as Jesus has loved us. This love is demanding; this is the only love that brings us lasting joy.

Immediately after Jesus expressed the desire that His joy become complete in us, He commands us to "love one another." What is His joy? The deep resonance of risen Life that arises from being faithful to the Father's will. What is the love He commands? Laying "down one's life." Joy and love are the Easter mystery made visible. Love always brings us to Good Friday, because then we gaze upon the Jesus Who lays down His life. This Jesus calls us to lay down our own life, to give ourselves over to the kind of self-giving life that brings Life to others. Joy always proclaims Easter Sunday, that day when Life burst forth from death. We who remain in Jesus' love and

welcome His joy in us embody the Easter mystery, make visible God's saving events, witness to bearing the fruit of the Father's gift of Life.

What may sound like a convoluted gospel text using the word love way too many times (nine times!) boils down to something really quite simply: live the Easter mystery every day of our lives. The second reading and gospel help us understand how we are to bring our Easter living down to something concrete and measurable. God expressed divine love by sending the Son "as expiation for our sins." Likewise, we express our love by "laying down" our lives. Love is no "pie-in-the sky" feeling as our contemporary society might have us believe. Instead love is laying down one's life by caring for others, keeping God's commandments, treating everyone as friend. Jesus' love for us is the model: He sacrificed His life, so must we; He overcame death, so must we overcome our own reluctance to die to self for the good of others. Our joy can be complete only when we love as Jesus did.

Living The Paschal Mystery

The gospel command to "love one another" demands a different kind of love than is projected by the media and society in general. Our love for one another is to emulate Jesus' love – a love that is total, demanding, self-emptying, self-giving. Jesus doesn't ask us to do anything that He hasn't done first.

Yes, the command is simple: "love one another." The demand is imposing: lay down our lives. Keeping God's commandments is laying down our lives – we surrender our will to doing God's

will and in this is the dying. Caring for and reaching out to others is laying down our lives – also a dying. Doing the little things every day not because we have to but because we see the other as the beloved of God is dying. We choose all these and other ways of dying because we know this is love and love is risen Life rising to kiss us with a share in divinity. And our joy is complete when we love in this way – as Jesus loves us.

Have today's scripture passages raised questions for you? Are you struggling with the kind of love that Jesus and our faith demands?

- I experience the joy of the risen Jesus when...He is completing His joy in me by...
- What helps me love others as Christ has commanded is...
- I find it most easy to lay down my life for others when...most difficult when...

About Liturgy: Eucharist As Love Feast

The *Didache* (literally “the Teachings”), a church document probably originating from early in the second century, is divided into two parts. The first describes “two ways” of conducting oneself: do good and live, or do evil and die. The second part of this important document reports on early church services. Chapters 9 and 10 describe what today we call the Eucharist. Scholars are divided whether this really refers to a celebration of the Lord's Supper, or an *agape* (love) banquet. What is clear in both parts is that love and caring for one another are essential for how Christians are to conduct themselves and how Christians are to worship.

Eucharist is a celebration of a love feast from two directions. First, in the Eucharist God expresses divine love and care for us in giving us the Body and Blood of our Lord for our nourishment and strength. Each celebration makes present Jesus' supreme act of self-giving to us. From our direction, Eucharist is not a private act. It is always the act of the whole church for the whole church, an expression of the community's unity in the Body of Christ which is made concrete in acts of charity and goodness, especially toward the less fortunate. At any number of places in the Eucharistic celebration we are reminded of our bond of love and charity toward one another: in the times we ask for forgiveness for wrongdoing; in praying for the needs of the church, world, those in need, and for the local community during the universal prayer; in presenting the gifts of bread and wine, of goods for the poor (our basket filled with dry and canned goods), of ourselves to be transformed; in the sign of peace where we embrace each other as members of Christ's Body, beloved of God and each other; in Holy Communion where we are fed at God's lavish messianic banquet table.

Eucharist is always a love feast, reminding us that our first responsibility as baptized members of the Body of Christ is to do as Jesus taught us: love one another as He has loved us.

Mother's Day

Today is Mother's Day, and although we never focus our weekly celebration of the resurrection on this civil holiday, nevertheless it is always fitting to remind ourselves of how good mothers model so well for us the kind of self-giving love that Jesus invites. And so we pray in thanksgiving for all mothers who nurture

the children in their care and love unconditionally as Jesus loves us. May each of you experience great joy today through your families, your children, and all those who love and esteem you.

All mothers will be invited forward at the conclusion of each liturgy this weekend to receive a special blessing from the Book of Blessings. In lieu of receiving a flower, we have decided to make a contribution to the Building Fund in your honor as a special gift for your vocation of motherhood. Our Knights of Columbus have joined us in this gesture. Blessings and all good wishes for a special day filled with much love.

The Mary Project

Each Mother's Day is also an opportunity for us to participate in The Mary Project, begun by **Kathleen Clarke**. As a result of the birth of her daughter, Mary, Kathleen wanted to find some way to give back for all the love and support she received when their daughter was born. It was from this desire that The Mary Project was born. You are invited to bring new and gently used baby items to any of the liturgies today which will then be taken by Kathleen to Birthright of Brentwood. Tables have been set up surrounding the Icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help to receive your donations. Many thanks for your participation and support.

Happy 100th Birthday Rose Lafferty

Today is an historic moment in the life of our parish as our first parishioner reaches the age of 100! Congratulations to **Rose Lafferty** on this historic occasion. Rose has been very involved in the life and ministry of the parish since becoming one of the

founding/Charter members. She has been involved with the "Harvesters" who raised money to build our church, as a Catechist, facilitating the RCIA process, and teaching scripture. She continues to facilitate a Scripture Study presently held on Thursday mornings from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Rose is being honored today with the Diocese of Oakland Medal of Merit for her outstanding contributions to the Diocese, the Parish, and our local community. Following the liturgy, a festive reception is being held in our parish hall to which all are invited. Congratulations and may God richly bless you for a life of such dedicated service.

Antioch Police Department Awards Ceremony

As the Catholic Chaplain for our Antioch Police Department, I will be participating in this coming Thursday's Annual Awards Ceremony which recognizes outstanding and meritorious service by our police officers as well as civilian staff. A part of the ceremony will be the awarding of the Officer of the Year status by our Knights of Columbus and presentation of a plaque to that officer as well as recognition of the outstanding civilian employee. The ceremony is open to the general public and takes place in our City Hall Council Chambers at 3:00 p.m.

Pentecost

The Great Fifty Days of the Easter Season will come to a conclusion the weekend of May 23rd and 24th as we celebrate the Solemnity of Pentecost. The color for the liturgies of the day is RED and you are invited to wear something red to help contribute to the environment as well as the festive nature of the liturgies. Again, thank you to all

those who contributed so generously to make our Easter Environment so beautiful this year and which was sustained by your generosity for the entire 50 days of the season.

The Festa do Espirito Santo

Our Portuguese Community will be celebrating the Feast of the Holy Spirit on Sunday, May 31st, at 11:00 a.m. at their Portuguese Hall on 10th Street. I will be presiding in Portuguese for this annual event and joining them for the meal of soupas that follows. This is a celebration to which I look forward each year, to the faith of our Portuguese sisters and brothers, to the excellent meal, the joy, and celebration of this great tradition. The celebration of Eucharist begins at 11:00 a.m. and is followed immediately by the meal which is free of charge to all who attend. This is in keeping with the tradition of the feast and no one is ever turned away. We will once again welcome Fr. Ricardo Chavez to preside and preach for our 10:00 a.m. liturgy that morning so that I can be at the Portuguese Hall by 10:30 a.m. to bless the meat and then preside and preach for the liturgy.

Annual Retreat

I will be away from the parish the week of June 1st at San Damiano for my annual Priest Retreat with other priests from our Diocese. I will return in the afternoon of Friday, June 5th. Please pray for me as well as for my brother priests as we take this time apart to deepen our relationship with the Lord.

Successful Hospitality Sunday

Thank you to YLI for hosting our first of the season Hospitality Sunday after last week's 8 and 10 AM liturgies. This was especially appropriate since the YLI

completed their pledge to the New Building Campaign with a presentation of \$1,000.56 to Father Robert on Friday May 1. Free will offerings for the donuts, juice and coffee generated an additional \$97 for the Building Fund! Thanks to all who participated!!!

Thank You

...to our faithful volunteer parishioners who arrived early last Saturday morning to clean and prepare the church and hall for the weekend: **Carole Miller, Rose Salamanca, Mency Osborne, Angela Bueno, Jun Bajet, Reno Benasfre, Steve Rojek, and Jack Goncalves.**
...to our volunteer parishioners who also came early to clean and maintain the bathrooms in both the church and parish hall: **Steve Rojek, Gino Ramos, Mary Ewing, and Harlan Young.**

A Personal Thank You

Once again, I would like to thank all those who not only remembered my birthday on April 30th but who also remembered my 41st anniversary of ordination last Sunday, May 3rd. I deeply appreciate the cards, personal notes, donations to the Building Fund in my honor, the bottles of wine, gift cards, boxes of See's Candy, the coffee mugs, and other gifts to help me honor this special day. I cannot begin to tell you how grateful I am to be here, to have all of you as parishioners, and to be able to share this journey of faith and love with you. You have made these ten of the happiest years of my life. Again, my gratitude...and love.

***THE GREAT DISPUTE IN
SAN FRANCISCO AND
THE WAY OF HUMILITY – A
Perspective From Father Richard
Mangini, Pastor of St. Bonaventure***

How it will all end or even how far it will get is not certain or clear. The “It” is the recent, unheard of dissent by a large number of wealthy and influential Catholics, in a paid ad in the San Francisco Chronicle, asking Pope Francis to remove Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone. I know many of those people.

Pushback has also begun with those who staunchly support the archbishop, trying to raise money to support their efforts. Will it all become much uglier? Time will tell. Some of our own Knights of Columbus want to get involved, contributing to the pro-Cordileone side. I told them that whatever they want to do personally is their decision, but the Knights of Columbus as a Parish group will not be supporting either side.

How has all this come to be? It is now an accumulation of many decisions and statements made by the archbishop and other priests, whom he has invited into the archdiocese from other places, who support his particular philosophy of Catholic Church life, who have said and done things that are pastorally weird, not necessary or helpful, and not in the mainstream of Catholic life and pastoral practice today. Really, to reject girls and young women from being altar servers, choosing only boys because that will foster vocations to the priesthood—that is a fanciful presumption.

It has come to a head, it seems, over the tweaking of language in parts of a new employment contract for Catholic school teachers in the archdiocese, which emphasize that such teachers should support and not contradict Catholic ideals, and should try to exemplify such

Catholic ideals in their lives, if they are going to be teachers in a Catholic school. It is all part of a plan by the bishops of California to try to clarify and promote Catholic Identity in Catholic schools. And using language such as “gravely evil” and “seriously disordered” is not helpful, welcoming, or conducive to “bringing people along.”

Some dioceses seem to have done better at this than others. Our own Bishop of Oakland ran into some difficulties when he tried to do that. In the end, he was gracious and wise enough to sit down with Catholic school teachers and work something out to everyone’s satisfaction. I think that is what was missing in San Francisco. While the bishop may have the juridical authority to teach and to lead in the Church, to do so arbitrarily and without collaboration or consultation is suicidal, creating more hard feelings and hardening of positions.

While we understand only what we read in the newspaper, the archbishop was going to consult theologians on the matter. Such consultation is not wide enough and must include those who are being affected.

Another factor also is the reality that the archbishop has brought into the diocese outside clergy who have no connection with the diocese, and has given them positions of responsibility and authority. I would think that this is demoralizing to the local clergy of the archdiocese.

Two of these “outside clergy” are creating the raucous situation at the Star of the Sea Parish. This is not a contest between Catholic Republicans and Catholic Democrats. Some of that ideology is certainly part of the situation.

The growing difficulty will not be solved by who shouts the loudest or who prints the largest ad. Humility on all sides would help.

Where is the Vatican in all this? Not known at the moment. The Pope does not know anything about the problem unless informed by the Papal Nuncio in Washington. Rome does not like such transparent disputes. When there is silence, it can seem that someone believes that “It” will just go away or that someone is trying to cover it up. If I were the Papal Nuncio, I would be out here sitting down with both sides. Silence will not resolve this.

There is still this fairy-tale-like approach to the office of a bishop. Not everyone is up to the job or has the gifts to do it, and it takes a very special person with supernatural qualities and instincts to lead in a collaborative, insightful, and pastoral way. And not everyone is best suited for every place. Because one has been educated in Rome or has served in a Vatican office does not necessarily mean that he can be a bishop anywhere.

There is a group of wealthy conservative Catholics who have wanted to insure “that their type of man” becomes an archbishop here or there. It is said that that was what happened in San Francisco. Of course, no one wants to talk about these things as if there are political shenanigans in the making of a bishop. Pope Francis has called for a new kind of bishop and has asked his Papal Ambassadors around the world to find such people. The present process is still too clerical, and it won’t get any better until lay people are involved in the process, I believe.

The “bishops know best” principle will no longer work. It takes all of the stakeholders to get involved in the life of a diocese.

The bishop accompanies the people and does not issue orders. The Church builds itself as it functions as an agent, bringing everyone together to find the path to the future together.

We can certainly pray for an end to the dispute, for a process of conversions and reconciliation, for what will be the best outcome for the archbishop and for the people.

If it remains “a War,” there will be no outcome. Only through the mercy of God, through humble listening, through a desire to start over again, to confess the mistakes that have been made will there be any hope.