

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, we begin the sixth week of Easter. Our Scripture readings of the past four weeks gave us inspiring and challenging thoughts, calling us to be Easter people. Easter people are called to go on into the uncertain future trusting that the risen Lord will meet them on their journey, to trust in the mercy of God and to be merciful just as our heavenly father is merciful, to be filled with God's peace and be channels of his peace for the world, to be vigilant and watchful just as the Lord is as our good shepherd and to be fruitful as disciples of Jesus which depends on our connection with Jesus our master.

On this Sixth Sunday of Easter, our Scripture readings call us to be joyful. Jesus tells us, "All these things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15: 11, today's Gospel). In the past few Sundays, we heard Jesus offering us "peace" as his farewell gift, "fulness of life" as the purpose of his coming and now "fulness of joy" as the reason for saying all that he said about his relationship with the father and all who follow him. In John chapter 17, we will hear him pray for complete union with the Father. Fulness of peace, Fulness of life, fulness of joy and complete union with the Father are what Jesus offer.

Today's Gospel focuses on fulness of Joy. Joy is God's gift to us. God has not abandoned us, His people. He has not given up on us. And that gives us reason to be joy-filled and joyful. This Joy empowers us to go on in hope, even when storms of life disrupt relationships, incredible tragedies such as war, violence and many such slings and arrows come straight at us. The joy that God gives us lives within and remains an ever-renewable wellspring of courage and peace because that joy is of God and that Joy is God himself. This is what Easter offers us.

Fulness of joy is not something that happens because we have become wealthy or acquired knowledge or skill or assumed important positions in society or became a Catholic and received all the sacraments. It is our lifestyle, the way we live, think and act. It is the way we approach the world. It is the way we find our life in Christ and live our life in Christ - abiding in His love. Jesus, himself lived a very joyful life, lived in perfect communion with His Heavenly Father, in absolute obedience to the Will of His Father, and accepting pain and suffering, even death on the cross in doing the will of his father.

In the first reading of today's Mass, Peter teaches us that God shows no partiality in His love and that there are no boundaries to abiding in love. Today's Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 98) also directs our attention toward God's marvelous love and kindness in offering salvation to the

whole world. In the second reading, John defines God as love and explains that He expressed His love for us by sending His son to die for us. The highest expression of this love is our willingness to lay down our lives as Jesus did for people who don't deserve it. The goal and result of our abiding in love, in God, is fullness of joy. Being joyful is often seen as something that may happen in some distant future, may be some place in heaven! Being joyful is not some project to be accomplished in the future. It is the experience of the present moment. Joyfulness springs from a sense of well-being right now, abiding in God's love, fulfilling his will and purpose, loving others as God loves us and not withholding our love even from the undeserving.

St. Paul advises us to make rejoicing a habit, "Rejoice in the Lord always" and again, I say, "Rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4). Paul was in prison and the Philippian converts were about to experience the pain of persecution when he gave this advice. Today, we must make this our habit and nurture authentic joy even in the midst of war, violence, political unrest, clergy scandal, etc. Martin Luther is supposed to have said, "If I knew that tomorrow was the end of the world, I would plant an apple tree today." The joy of being alive today and being the beneficiaries of other people's hard work, is expressed in making a contribution of our own to the world around us....planting apple tree is a way of saying, "thank you" and saying, "I am glad...I rejoice...The world has been good to me....I will bless the world.....and more!

An old man was digging holes in his garden in India. Seeing him hard at work, a neighbor asked him what he was doing. "Planting mango trees", he answered. "Do you expect to eat fruits from these trees", the neighbor asked. "No", the old man said. "I won't live long enough to enjoy the fruits, but others will. It occurred to me that, all my life, I have enjoyed mangoes planted by other people. This is my way of showing them gratitude."

Change your attitude....Nurture attitudes that create joy! Rejoice in your calling and be faithful to what you are called to be and to do. You may not see the results, but others will. Today we are blessed and nurtured through the faithfulness of others who have gone before us. Be grateful for the many faithful people who left mangoes for you and it is up to you now to leave mangoes for others. Rejoice in the memory of all who have left mangoes for you! Share your joy with those around you...leave a few mangoes for others!

Nurture joyfulness by choosing to appreciate all that you have and are and are becoming. Focus on what is working in your life and not what is not working. You have so much to be grateful for. If you can wiggle your toes when you wake up in the morning, say "thank you" for the gift of another day and choose to be joyful and joy-filled for the day. Your joyful presence will help others fulfill their daily responsibilities with more joy. Nurture joyfulness by choosing to do for you what the Lord has done for you! He has loved you and called you to be his friend. He has called you to fullness of life and fullness of joy.

God bless you and your family.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 5, 2024

**God had brought me to my knees and made me acknowledge my own nothingness,
and out of that knowledge I had been reborn.
I was no longer the center of my life
and therefore I could see God in everything.
(Bede Griffiths)**

Collect

Grant, almighty God,
that we may celebrate with heartfelt devotion these days of joy,
which we keep in honor of the risen Lord,
and that what we relive in remembrance
we may always hold to in what we do.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Liturgy of the Word

Prayerfully read the first reading and then read my reflections below and spend a few moments of personal reflection. Do the same with Responsorial Psalm and other readings.

**Dear Lord, grant us the gift of forbearance that we may be gentle, kind and
understanding when those around us are tired
and weary of everyday concerns.**

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

Peter began to see things and people differently because he had an experience of Jesus and a radical conversion resulting from that experience. Peter was a real Jew, true to his traditions and like all good Jews, he saw the gentiles as unclean and unworthy of respect. This passage from Acts tells us how Peter was able to accept the invitation of Cornelius, go to his house, accept his hospitality and accept Cornelius and others as children of God. The Spirit of Jesus transformed Peter and gave him a new way of seeing and relating.

Radical conversion is possible for all, in the Spirit of Jesus. An encounter with Jesus makes it possible for us to see God, ourselves, others and the world in a new light, in the light of Jesus and bring us into loving relationship with all God' people.

Psalm 98

The Psalmist invites his people to sing a "NEW" song, because God has done "Marvelous" things. God had grasped the right hand of King Cyrus, mighty monarch of Persia....the most powerful monarch of the then known world and used his power to allow a handful of miserable Israelites (poor remnant Israel) to get out their situation of forced labor in Babylon and be free to return home to Jerusalem (c. 539 B.C.). The temple was rebuilt in 516 B.C. and rededicated a few months later. This was a whole new situation, and this psalm was for this new situation of a renewed people in a new temple building. What else to do but sing a "NEW SONG"!

**Sing to the Lord a new song,
For he has done wondrous deeds;
His right hand has won victory for him, his holy arm.....
Sing joyfully to the Lord, all you lands,
Break into song, sing praise.....**

1 John 4:7-10

"Love is of God who is love...love consists in this that God has loved us." John tells us that it is in this love of God that we can respond to the command to "love one another".

The source of our love is God...the place where we learn to love is God and God's love.

The opposite also is true, says this passage from the letter of John.....one who does not love knows nothing of God.....he/she is not in God and so has not learned to love....

Send your roots deep into the mystery God's life and love! Abide in His Love!

John 15:9-17

This Gospel passage describes the boundless and limitless love of Jesus to which the disciples are called. This boundless, limitless, unconquerable, invincible love is, "no greater love than this.....love one another as I have loved you...." The reason for this love is, "you are my friends." He lays down his life because he loves his followers.

Friends of Jesus must become friends of one another. Jesus gathers a community of followers not based on certain set of rules, but founded on friendship, on self-sacrificing love, on total giving..... “love one another as I have loved you” the standard is not as others love you, or as you love yourself, but “as I love you” as Jesus loves us, as God loves us! And Jesus made it very clear, it was “his choice” he chose to lay down his life for his friends.....

Jesus said, “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.....Abide in my love.... that my joy may be yours and your joy may be complete.” The secret of the life of Jesus was his contact with the Father. Again, and again, he withdrew to quiet places to be alone with the father. He knew what it meant to “abide” in the Father’s Love. His disciples must do the same.

Jesus said, “Love one another as I have loved you.” It is a challenge to reach out to others in love - “not to withhold” our love from others. We are called to give what we have received as gifts from the Lord. Jesus calls us his friends, not slaves....it was his choice, not ours. Now it is up to us to make our own choices in response.

It is never sufficient to abstain from wrong-doing or sin or evil. We are called to be good and to do good - a good word and a good deed proclaim who we are. We have many opportunities to share God’s gift of Love and life. We meet people who are hurting and bleeding and needing a “transfusion” of love.

The standard of love is NOT an eye for an eye or love others as they love us or love others as we love ourselves...it is “Love one another as I have loved you”. The standard is to love as God loves us, as Jesus loves us....it is joyful, unconditional, unconquerable, invincible, non-possessive, self-sacrificing, enduring, steadfast love!

Be Still for a few moments!

Pray for your needs and those of your family and community.

Spiritual Communion

Lord Jesus, I believe in your real presence in the Eucharist, the Sacrament of the Altar. I place myself in your presence and adore you, worship you and glorify you. I am unable to receive you in Holy Communion at Mass today. I hunger and thirst for your way, your truth and your life. Come into my heart Lord and satisfy my hunger and quench my thirst. Bless me that I may give witness to your presence in my life. Amen

Be Still for a few moments!

Saint of the Day, May 5 – St. Hilary of Arles and 17 other saints are remembered this day.

St. Hilary of Arles was born around the year 401, probably northern Gaul. In his early youth, around 420, Hilary entered the Abbey of Lérins that was presided over by his kinsman Honoratus, who later became bishop of Arles. In 429 Hilary succeeded Honoratus as bishop and continued to follow in his footsteps. Hilary was only 29 when he was chosen to be bishop of Arles.

The new, youthful bishop undertook the role with confidence. He did manual labor to earn money for the poor. He sold sacred vessels to ransom captives. He became a magnificent orator. He traveled everywhere on foot, always wearing simple clothing.

That was the bright side. Hilary encountered difficulty in his relationships with other bishops over whom he had some jurisdiction. He unilaterally deposed one bishop. He selected another bishop to replace one who was very ill—but, to complicate matters, did not die! Pope Saint Leo the Great kept Hilary a bishop but stripped him of some of his powers. Hilary died on May 5, 449 in Arles.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**Keep your heart in a good place, a place of joy and peace.
Put your best foot forward!**