

6th Sunday of Easter C

During the 40-day period between Easter and the Ascension of our Lord, the liturgy, especially the readings, invites us to focus our attention on heaven—our final dwelling place. This invitation becomes more pressing as we approach his ascension. In the Gospel of today Jesus says, “Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. I am going away, but I will come back to take you to myself.” Jesus keeps his word. He comes to take us to him at our moment of death. In order to spend eternity with him, we have to love him and live according to his teachings. “Whoever loves me will keep my word.”

A Man for all Seasons is a movie based on the true story of St. Thomas More, the chancellor of England, who refused to endorse King Henry VIII’s wish to divorce his wife, Catherine. Thomas More was a devoted Catholic, and so he could not endorse Henry’s plan for divorce. Thomas More’s daughter, Margaret, knew what his refusal would cost him. So she pleaded with him to endorse Henry’s plan. But he said, “When a man makes a commitment, he puts himself in the hands of God and commits to follow him till the very end. I wish to follow my commitment.” The life of St. Thomas More was modeled after Christ’s own words, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word.” This is Jesus’ idea of commitment and loyalty. Following that commitment to love him, we gather every week to remember what he did for our salvation. His expectations are high from us who have made that commitment to love and belong to him at our baptism. There is no “wobble room,” no exceptions, and no excuses. In the history of the church, there are many wonderful examples of commitment and loyalty. What counts at the end is our loyalty to him and not name or fame.

How many of you can list the last 10 presidents of this country? Can you list the 10 wealthiest people in the world? Can you list the last 10 Miss America winners or Nobel Prize winners? All these worldly winners are soon forgotten. Name is deceptive and fame is fleeting. But love alone is enduring. None of us will ever forget those who have touched our lives—our parents, teachers, mentors, and special friends. Jesus was not about worldly fame but about love. He was all about touching and transforming minds and hearts with his love.

St. Francis of Assisi met a woman who told him that she did not love or obey God. As they were talking and walking along, they passed a man who was both blind and crippled. Francis asked the blind man, “If I give you sight and enable you to walk, what would you do? The man said, “I would love you and be your servant forever.” Francis turned to the woman and asked her, “Why do you not love and serve the Almighty who has blessed you with sight and the ability to walk?” He loves us in spite of our failures.

Once a little girl was sitting and watching her mother do the dishes at the kitchen sink. She suddenly noticed that her mother had several strands of white hair sticking to her forehead. She looked at her mother and inquisitively asked, “Why are some of your hairs white, Mom?” Her mother replied, “Well, every time you do something wrong and make me cry or unhappy, one of my hairs turns white.” The little girl thought about this revelation for a while and then said, “Momma, now I know why Grandma’s hairs are all white.”

Our love for God is a commitment that we need to live out every day of our lives. That is a commitment that goes beyond the Sunday Mass. Bernard Shaw once said, “Beware of the man whose God is in the skies.” In other words, a hypocrite is the person who pretends to be someone he is not on Sundays. We must establish our love for God by doing what he wants us to do. To profess love for God and forget his Commandments is “decaffeinated Christianity.” It is the Gospel according to us and not according to Jesus. Let us not bury the Scripture in our selves but in our minds and hearts. Let us love God and live out that love every day of our lives.