

## Homily for the Sixth Sunday of Easter 2021 Year B

In today's first reading Saint Peter says something quite remarkable, "God has no favourites".

Now imagine how that went down to Jewish ears, the Chosen People. Imagine how it sounded to all the recent converts who, at great sacrifice and cost to themselves, decided to follow Christ the Son of God. Surely, they were special in God's sight?

There is something in human nature, in all of us, that we like to be respected, to be held in high esteem, to be special, to be a favourite, especially in God's sight.

History is scattered with races, cultures and religions that claimed to have exclusive access to God's ears and God's heart. To a certain extent our own church, the Catholic Church, was just as guilty. Up until the 1960's and the time of the Second Vatican Council, it was still part of the official teaching of the church, that outside it there was no Salvation. That teaching has now changed.

God has no favourites, could have no favourites. He created us all, and therefore he loves us all equally. We are all precious in his sight. If he ever ceased to think about us or stop loving us, even for one second, we would cease to exist. Each one of us is held very close in the mind and heart of God. It is the basis of the universal human dignity of every person.

That love of course has nothing to do with merit or worthiness on our part. We cannot earn or deserve God's love; it is all infinitely and freely given. We are loveable because God created us.

Like it or not, we are all God's favourites, and it is God's will that we should all be saved.

If we want to claim specialness at all in God's sight, it is not a matter of who we are, it is a matter of what God wants us to do. It is a specialness of purpose.

The Jews were called God's Chosen People because they were to have a specific part to play in the whole history of Salvation.

He did not, He could not love the rest of us of His creation less. That would be a nonsense.

We are now special in God's sight, but it is a specialness of purpose. By virtue of our baptism, we are called upon to play a special part in God's plan for the Salvation of all mankind.

Those within the church do not have a monopoly of God, or God's attention, or of God's love; nor do we have a monopoly of Truth.

Christ himself says in the Gospels that there is great diversity among the People of God, "there are other sheep that I have that are not of this fold, and they too, must listen to my voice".

Now that is where we and our specialness comes in. It is not a specialness that enables us to lord it over others; it is a specialness of service.

We are at the service of the whole people of God. By virtue of our Baptism and membership of the Church, each one of us has a Missionary role to bear Christ gently and courteously to others.

God does not love us more, but our membership of the Church, founded, guided, and protected by Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit, gives us distinct advantages and insights over others. We have a sort of edge, and with that edge comes responsibility, responsibility to place and use all those advantages at the Service of others.

To have that responsibility and live up to that responsibility is to be very special indeed.