

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

YEAR B

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Lord God,
we can do nothing good
without the help
of your Spirit.
Send that Spirit to us now
so that we may be quick
to forgive those who hurt us,
ready to spread
the good news about Jesus,
and to love our neighbor
as ourself.
We ask this
through Jesus, your Son,
who lives with you
forever and ever.

FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

The mission of the church is to love— all people, everywhere.

The ultimate sign of the Christian believer is love. Love is not an option. It is the commandment of the One who witnessed to his love for us by giving his life. The Gospel tells us, with the clearest of focus: "You are my friends if . . . you love one another."

In our first reading, Peter tells us that this love must be all inclusive. "God does not have favorite people." God's Spirit is poured out on the Gentiles as well as the Jews. The Christian community is founded, not in externals, but in Christ's love.

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

After the first reading, ask the children to recall the story:

- Who was there?
- Where were they?
- Why were they there?
- What happened while Peter was speaking?
- What did Peter say to the people?

Peter taught us something very special and very important in today's reading. He said, "God does not have favorite people." God loves all of us. God does not love some people more than others. There isn't anyone—not anyone at all—that God loves more than you. We want to always remember that.

FIRST READING: Acts 10:24, 34-35, 44-48

This is a reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

Peter, and some of the other disciples went to the house of Cornelius.

Cornelius had invited his relatives and friends to hear Peter speak. Peter said to them,

"I am beginning to see now that it is true;
God does not have favorite people.
Anyone, from any country,
who loves God and lives in God's ways,
is saved."

As Peter was speaking,
the Holy Spirit came
to all those who were listening.

They began speaking in strange languages
and praising God.

The Jewish believers who had come with Peter were surprised that the gift of the Holy Spirit was given to the Gentiles too.

But Peter said,

"If these people have received the Holy Spirit,
just as we have,
why shouldn't they be baptized with water?"

So they were all baptized
in the name of Jesus Christ.

This is the Word of the Lord.

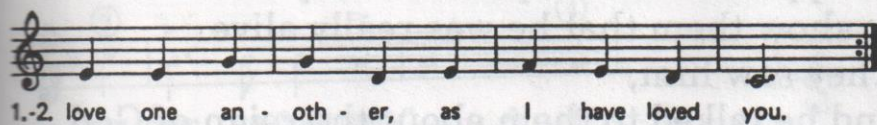
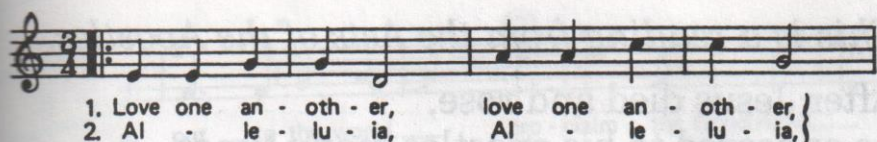
RESPONSE: Psalm 104

RESPONSE:

VERSES:

* Round during final response only

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:



GOSPEL: John 15:9-14

This is a reading from the Gospel of John.

Jesus said to his disciples,

I love you
just as God loves me.
Live always in my love.
If you keep my commandments,
you are living in my love.
I am telling you this
so that you may be completely filled
with my joy.
This is my commandment:
love one another
just as I have loved you.
There is no greater love
than to give your life for your friends.
And you are my friends
if you do what I tell you.
The commandment I am giving you is this:
love one another.

This is the Good News of the Lord.

During this Easter season we celebrate that. Jesus loves everyone and showed his great love by dying and rising. Jesus did that for all of us: people who sin, people who try to be good, people who love him and people who don't love him, people who know him and people who don't know him, people who are in trouble, people of all races, people of all countries, people of all sizes and shapes, people who are old and people who are young and even people who aren't born yet.

Let's listen to the Gospel to hear how important this love is to Jesus.

After the Gospel, remind the children that Jesus said he was telling us this—to love one another—so that we would have joy. Ask the children if that is their experience. Are people happier when they love one another? Perhaps they could share some examples.

Jesus tells us how he wants us to love others.

- What did he say?
- What do you think Jesus meant when he said,
"Love one another as I
have loved you"?

Note: this is a crucial point in our Christian faith. Christian love is a commandment. But children can easily misunderstand this. Jesus loves with "divine love." God is love. We are not commanded to love "as much as," that is, with divine love. We are commanded to love "in the way" Jesus loved. This commandment is first given in an earlier part of this "last discourse of Jesus," just after he has washed the feet of his disciples in an attitude of service. And so we are commanded to love (serve) one another. The greatest love is shown by giving our lives for others—in service. Children should never feel guilty about not loving everyone equally. That is a universal love attained by few. Jesus teaches us to show loving service to anyone and everyone.

Remind the children that Jesus said,
"there is no greater love
than to give your life
for your friends."

Jesus gave his life for us when he died. But he also gave his life for others by healing them, helping them, and caring for them. How can we "give our lives" for others now?

Help them to see ways of doing this (things possible for children):

- including all children in games;
- talking to a child who feels alone;
- helping someone with a task;
- taking time, perhaps from play, to help someone;
- accepting people just as they are.

Jesus asks us to love this way because he loves us so much. Jesus loves everyone and wants us to love everyone too. That's what a Christian is—someone who believes Jesus is living and who lives like him.

