

Fr. Romeo Homily
May 5, 2019
Third Sunday of Easter (C)

So many people exchange “I love you’s” everyday. And various meanings are given to this sentence by different people. Addressed by children to their parents, it means “trust”. Uttered by parents to their children, it means “protection and security”. When young men and women whisper it to each other, it denotes “desire or attraction”. Friends use this to mean “support and camaraderie”. Love expressed to others is a necessary ingredient to happiness and security.

The Gospel tells us that love must be elevated to a higher level. Apart from just the human circle, love must be expressed between God and a person; between the Creator and his creature; the Master and his disciple. We see Jesus, Love Crucified and Risen, and his struggling disciple Peter who weakly but sincerely says “I love you, Lord”. Without a convinced love for God, our faith cannot be considered genuine. The first of the apostles, our first Pope, had to ratify his love and devotion to the person of the Lord.

In the eyes of other Christians, we Catholics, fail miserably in the verbalization of love. Compared to Charismatic and Pentecostal groups, who shamelessly shout and yell their “I love you, Lord”, we, Catholics are a silent, shy group. But we do love the Lord in many other ways. Like silent adoration, kneeling and bowing, reverencing icons and even through formal prayers. It need not be overtly emotional and publicly displayed, but our love is just as real and heartfelt.

What happens when a person declares his love for the Lord? In the person of Peter, we have a guide to the answer.

First, a Christian who truly loves God is trusted with a mission. He becomes ready to undertake a serious commitment of faith. When Peter declares his love, Jesus forgets Peter’s denial and instead makes him a shepherd of his people. “Tend my sheep, feed my lambs”.

A person who truly loves the Lord becomes ready to serve others like the Lord whom he loves. This is crucial for all Christians assuming any role at home or in the church and community – parents, politicians, managers, teachers. The power of love strengthens and sustains people who devote themselves to others.

Second, a Christian who declares his love for the Lord willingly and humbly obeys the Lord. This is what Peter says in our reading: we would rather obey God than men. So love is not just a sweet, cajoling word; not an empty, dreamy phrase. Love is made concrete when you obey the one you love. This should make us question whether we obey the Lord in our lives. Is there any area of your life where you, not God, are the master? It is in obeying God's will that we show to the world, not by words but more convincingly, by actions, that we return the love of Jesus for us.

Jesus poses a very personal question to us today: "Do you love me"? If our answer is Yes, then we should be ready to follow him all the days of our life. As Jesus said to Peter, "Follow me".