

Sixth Sunday of Easter - Lectionary: 55

Reading 1 - [Acts 8:5-8, 14-17](#)

Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Christ to them. With one accord, the crowds paid attention to what was said by Philip when they heard it and saw the signs he was doing. For unclean spirits, crying out in a loud voice, came out of many possessed people, and many paralyzed or crippled people were cured. There was great joy in that city. Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who went down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for it had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

Responsorial Psalm - [Psalm 66:1-3, 4-5, 6-7, 16, 20](#) - R. (1) Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

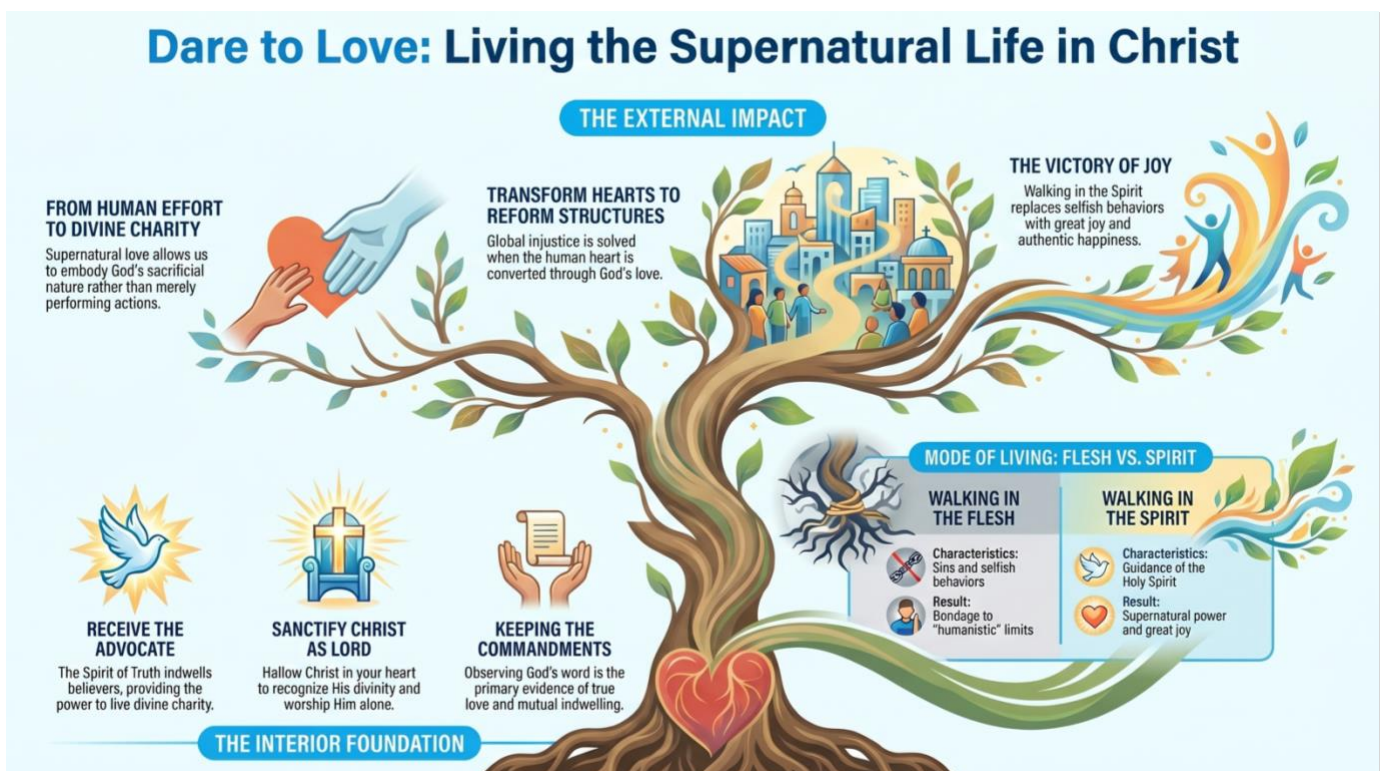
Reading 2 - [1 Peter 3:15-18](#)

Beloved: Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that be the will of God, than for doing evil.

For Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God. Put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the Spirit.

Gospel - [John 14:15-21](#)

Jesus said to his disciples: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows him. But you know him, because he remains with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me, because I live and you will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him."



Summary

This homily synthesizes theological themes derived from the lectionary readings for the Sixth Sunday of Easter. The central thesis is that authentic Christian life is not merely an adherence to humanistic moral standards, but a "supernatural life" made possible through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The key takeaways include:

- **The Role of the Advocate:** The Holy Spirit is presented as the "Spirit of truth" and an "Advocate" who ensures believers are not left as orphans, but rather become temples of God's presence.
- **The Commandment of Love:** Love is defined as a reciprocal relationship of indwelling—where keeping Christ's commandments is both the proof of love and the condition for abiding in the Father.
- **Transformation of the Heart:** Social and structural reform in the world is contingent upon the conversion of the human heart. Injustice is rooted in the heart; therefore, global change begins with interior renewal.
- **The Call to "Dare to Love":** Believers are invited to move beyond selfish behaviors ("walking in the flesh") to a sacrificial, covenantal love that reflects the nature of the Trinity.

The Christian vocation is a call to become "missionaries of love." This is achieved not through independent human effort, but by hallowing Christ in the heart and allowing the Holy Spirit to transform the individual into a "beloved lover." This interior harmony between the self and God is presented as the ultimate secret to authentic happiness and the only viable path to reforming a disordered world.

Dare to Love: Called to Live Supernatural Lives

In a core passage of his message to the Youth of the World on the occasion of the 22nd World Youth Day, 2007, Pope Benedict XVI said: *"My dear young friends, I want to invite you to 'dare to love.' Do not desire anything less for your life than a love that is strong and beautiful and that is capable of making the whole of your existence a joyful undertaking of giving yourselves as a gift to God and your brothers and sisters, in imitation of the One who vanquished hatred and death forever through love."*¹

Dare to Love, not according to a purely humanistic definition of love. The Most Holy Trinity wants to unleash supernatural power in our lives through the Holy Spirit, the supernatural power of love and to love. To walk according to the Spirit, which is love within us, means to live one's daily life by the Holy Spirit's guidance and empowerment. To walk in the flesh is to live a life characterized by various sins and selfish behaviors. Dare to Love, is daring to unleash the Holy Spirit who desires to transform us, to make of us beloved lovers according to the spiritual, covenantal, and sacrificial love manifested by Jesus. There is only one true source of love, and that is God. St John made this clear when he declared that "God is love".² In God, one and triune, there is an everlasting exchange of love between the persons of the Father and the Son, and this love is not an energy or a sentiment, or something that changes, it is a person; the Holy Spirit for whom we are the temple.

For those who have been made one in Christ, the Holy Spirit personally indwells them, making of them temples of the Spirit who therefore abide in Christ and are able to live out divine charity. St. Augustine put it this way: *"the Holy Spirit inflames the human person to love God and neighbor, and "He is Himself love," given so that believers may abide in God."*³ The Catechism connects this indwelling directly to charity as God's own life within us: the Spirit gives the "pledge/first fruits" of the inheritance—"the very life of the Holy Trinity, which is to love as 'God has loved us'," made possible because we receive "power" from the

¹ [Message Of The Holy Father Benedict XVI To The Youth Of The World On The Occasion Of The 22nd World Youth Day, 2007](#)

² 1 Jn 4: 8,16

³ Augustine of Hippo. "On the Trinity - Book 15." In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., ca. 0415. <https://archive.org/details/the-complete-ante-nicene-nicene-and-post-nicene-church-fathers>.

Holy Spirit.⁴ Pope St. John Paul II explained that this is at the heart of life in Christ, that the abiding of God in man is verified as a spiritual reality grounded in grace, and that confidence flows from active love of God and neighbor, which can change the “state of sin into the state of grace” and make the heart dwell again with the Living God. And in the words of St. John, *“All who keep his commandments abide in him (God), and he (God) in them.”*⁵

Dare to love. *“Beloved: Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts.”*⁶ These are the first words of the second reading, and they are the key to abiding in God and God in us. St. Peter is saying literally to ‘hallow’ or ‘reverence Christ as Lord’, just as in the Lord’s Prayer. The words imply recognition of the divinity of Jesus Christ, that is, render him the worship that is due to God alone. Christ, who is *the way, the truth and the life,*⁷ is the one who can change our heart in his eternally loving heart. Through this mutual indwelling, he in us and we in him, we can become missionaries of his love to the world. Without this grace, we cannot become what we touch, we will not be lovers who love as the beloved of God, and the world will not know us as disciples of Christ by our love.

As Pope St. John Paul II said, the source of injustice is the human heart that does not know or that in some way rejects authentic humanity, therefore reform of structures becomes possible through conversion of hearts and the regaining of authentic human identity. He said, *“through the power of his Spirit, the same Jesus who died on the Cross and rose from the dead is alive in his Church; he is alive in you who bear his name as Christians and who strive to listen to his words of life. I am here to proclaim this presence of Jesus in your lives and the power of his love working in your hearts. Because of this presence and this power, you can do great things.”*⁸

When he met with young people in Mexico in March of 2012 Pope Benedict reminded them, *“If we allow the love of Christ to change our heart, then we can change the world. This is the secret of authentic happiness.”*⁹ *“God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.”*¹⁰ This love which is God, is light *“the only light—that can always illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage needed to keep living and working. Love is possible, and we are able to practice it because we are created in the image of God.”*¹¹

Pope Francis, in his encyclical *Dilexit Nos*, also stressed the need for God’s love to change the human heart, he said, *“the world changes by the transformation of human hearts, but the transformation is*

⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1992. § 736. https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM.

⁵ 1 Jn 3:24

⁶ 1 Pet 3:15

⁷ John 14:6

⁸ As a pastor and as a brother, I wish to offer you today a powerful reason to hope and to see life as a great and precious gift of God. And this reason is Jesus Christ, the Son of God who came into the world to teach us the full meaning of human life. Through the power of his Spirit, the same Jesus who died on the Cross and rose from the dead is alive in his Church; he is alive in you who bear his name as Christians and who strive to listen to his words of life. I am here to proclaim this presence of Jesus in your lives and the power of his love working in your hearts. Because of this presence and this power you can do great things. This is your life’s call, a call of God to serve your community and your Church. Perhaps you will be called to serve as a husband or wife, a parent, a single person, a religious or a priest. But in every case it is a call to a personal conversion, a call to open your hearts to the message of Christ and to his power in your lives. Every economic, social or political structure in the world that needs reform can be adequately changed only when our hearts are purified, because the source of all injustice is the human heart. Young people of Newfoundland and of all Canada, you are invited by Christ to a conversion of heart, to a life lived in union with him. For this reason you must not let yourselves be overwhelmed by anxiety, by the painful sense of helplessness, or by the temptation to revolt or drop out. No one can deny that much of the world is in frightening disorder: the inhumanity of many persons and the injustice of certain systems cause unspeakable human misery; the possibility of nuclear confrontation creates anxiety and fear. But you are in a position to face all problems with a new attitude, a new heart, a new power: your faith in Jesus Christ who is alive in you. In the words of Saint John: “This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith” (1 Jo. 5, 4). Pope John Paul II. *Speech to youth of Newfoundland*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1984.

<https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1984/september/documents/hfjp-iispe19840912giovani-terranova.html>.

⁹ Meeting with young people *Address of his Holiness Benedict XVI, Plaza de la Paz, Guanajuato, Saturday, 24 March 2012*

¹⁰ 1 Jn 4:16

¹¹ Pope Benedict XVI. *Deus Caritas Est*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005. (39) <https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hfben-xvenc20051225deus-caritas-est.html>.

achieved by God's love given in Christ, received and lived in concrete ways."¹² Pope Benedict repeatedly called us to reflect on this same truth of our experience of God loving us, encouraging us when he said that communion fosters more communion, the more we let God make us one with him the more we experience this unity with his will. In *Deus Caritas Est* he reminded us of this powerful dynamic of true love, saying: *The love-story between God and man consists in the very fact that this communion of will increases in a communion of thought and sentiment, and thus our will and God's will increasingly coincide: God's will is no longer for me an alien will, something imposed on me from without by the commandments, but it is now my own will, based on the realization that God is in fact more deeply present to me than I am to myself. Then self-abandonment to God increases and God becomes our joy.* 'Deus Caritas Est' gives the logic behind the idea that the world changes beginning with the heart: God's love in Christ is meant to transform hearts, and from that interior renewal charity becomes a visible social reality. In other words, true love is calling us to be its missionaries around the globe so that God's light might re-enter our world.

Dare to love. We are the "love of God" rather than just people who love. When we have sanctified Christ as lord in our hearts, our ability to love as a reflection or conduit of God's nature flows freely from us. Our love goes beyond human effort. Through the Holy Spirit we are able to embody God's sacrificial love (or *charity*) rather than merely performing loving actions. This view contrasts with a purely humanistic definition of love, focusing instead on the spiritual, covenantal, and sacrificial love modeled by Jesus.

This truth represents a deep understanding of what life is really about, of how it is to be lived in partnership with one's brothers and sisters in our common search to make this world truly God's Kingdom—to make this world the kind of place that God wants it to be. It combines the ideas of wholeness and integrity, a total harmony between the inner and outer self and between the self and God. All this we find in the highest degree in Jesus.

Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition
Advocate	The "Spirit of truth" promised by Jesus to remain with and within his disciples forever.
Charity	God's own love within the believer; the spiritual and sacrificial love that goes beyond human effort.
Communion of Will	A state where a believer's desires and God's will coincide, making God's commands an internal joy rather than an external imposition.
Conversion of Heart	The purification of the inner self and the regaining of authentic human identity through the power of the Spirit.
Dilexit Nos	An encyclical by Pope Francis emphasizing that the world changes through the transformation of hearts received and lived in concrete ways.
Hallow / Sanctify	To reverence or worship Christ as Lord within the heart, recognizing his divinity.
Indwelling	The spiritual reality of the Holy Trinity living within a person, making them a "temple of the Spirit."
Laying on of Hands	An apostolic action performed by Peter and John used to confer the Holy Spirit upon the baptized.
Missionaries of Love	Believers who, through the grace of mutual indwelling, reflect God's nature and carry his light into the world.
Supernatural Power	The empowerment provided by the Holy Spirit that enables believers to love in imitation of Christ.
Walking in the Flesh	A life characterized by selfish behaviors and various sins, operating apart from the Spirit's guidance.

¹² Pope Francis. *Dilexit nos*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2024. (pages 28-30)
<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/20241024-enciclica-dilexit-nos.html>.