

## The Sixth Sunday of Easter - Year B - 10th May, 2015

Again the Lectionary continues with the call to live a life of sacrificial love in order to know and share resurrection. This week the "one another" that we are called to love expands in radical and universal ways, leaving us with no excuse for any refusal to love, and inviting us to become part of the cosmic love-community that God has established in Christ.

May our love for God, expressed in our worship, expand to include all of the creation that God created and loves with death-defying love.

### INTRODUCTIONS

*For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines*

#### **Acts 10 : 44-48**

A Roman centurion, Cornelius, and his family, had invited Peter and his Christian friends to explain about Jesus. To everyone's amazement. God's Holy Spirit palpably came upon them, and they were baptised into the Christ faith.

#### **Psalm 98**

An exhortation to all creation to praise God for the wonderful works God has done, revealing God's righteousness to all nations and bringing God's justice into the world among all people.

#### **1 John 5 : 1-6**

Another short section from this letter brings us this week to one of the consequences of our love for God. John says we must be obedient, as a child to a loving parent, and we shall not find it difficult.

#### **John 15 : 9-17**

We heard last Sunday Jesus's illustrations of how a vine and its branches are like his life flowing through us. This passage follows on directly, and expands the idea of Christ living in us as we live in him, his beloved friends, chosen by him to be fruitful in his work.

Click here to view the readings

[http://bible.oremus.org/?show\\_adj=no&passages=Acts%2010:%2044-48%0A%2BOR%0AIsaiah%2045:%2011-13,%2018-19%0A%20Psalm%2098%0A1%20John%205:%201-6%0AJohn%2015:%209-17](http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Acts%2010:%2044-48%0A%2BOR%0AIsaiah%2045:%2011-13,%2018-19%0A%20Psalm%2098%0A1%20John%205:%201-6%0AJohn%2015:%209-17)

### COLLECTS OF THE DAY

#### **Collect One**

O Lord,  
from whom all good things do come;  
Grant to us thy humble servants,  
that by thy holy inspiration  
we may think those things that be good,  
and by thy merciful guiding may perform the same;  
through our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **Collect Two**

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God our redeemer,  
you have delivered us from the power of darkness  
and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:  
Grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life,  
so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

How fully God in Christ has joined himself to us! We are no longer slaves or servants but friends. Gladly we pray, "Reconciler Divine, hear us." Our response is simply,

**Alleluia, Amen.**

That those who work as pastoral teams throughout the congregations of the church may live in harmony, act decisively to redeem, relieve injury of heart, and break the Bread of Life among us. Reconciler Divine, hear us.

**Alleluia, Amen.**

That those who act as managers of the great cities of our world may see clearly the areas under their rule, understand the needs of the powerless and those in want, and serve to build relationships. Reconciler Divine, hear us.

**Alleluia, Amen.**

That those in administrative posts in small towns and cities may not seek pride in their accomplishments, but celebrate the privilege and weight of service. Reconciler Divine, hear us.

**Alleluia, Amen.**

That those in the jails and prisons of our land may learn respect for the rule of law and turn from greed, lust, and ignorance of society's needs. Reconciler Divine, hear us.

**Alleluia, Amen.**

That those who watch over the incarcerated may learn patience, curb anger, and show respect for those in bonds. Reconciler Divine, hear us.

**Alleluia, Amen.**

Forgive us, Lord, when we permit ourselves to be detached from you and accept a fruitless life as good. Restore us that we may bear fruit, more fruit, much fruit in our lives. Reconciler Divine, hear us.

**Alleluia, Amen.**

Our prayers come before you with all humility. In Christ's name we pray.

**Amen.**

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### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

*Presider or deacon*

God loved us and sent the Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Let us offer prayers to God for the needs, hopes, and concerns of all human beings.

*Deacon or other leader*

For this holy gathering and for those who enter our circle of faith.

**Glory and praise to you, O living God.**

For *NN* and the newly baptized illumined by the light of Christ.

**Glory and praise to you, O living God.**

For all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.

**Glory and praise to you, O living God.**

For the leaders of the nations and for all who seek peace.

**Glory and praise to you, O living God.**

For the suffering peoples of the world.

**Glory and praise to you, O living God.**

For those who experience desolation and for those who feel remote from God.

**Glory and praise to you, O living God.**

For the sick, the dying, and the dead.

**Glory and praise to you, O living God.**

For ourselves, our families, and those we love.

**Glory and praise to you, O living God.**

Remembering Saint \_\_\_\_\_ and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

*Presider*

Blessed are you, Lord of heaven and earth, who gives the Holy Spirit to all who believe. Hear our prayers for all peoples and grant us the power to love one another as we love you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### POST COMMUNION

God our Father,  
whose Son Jesus Christ gives the water of eternal life:  
May we also thirst for you,  
the spring of life and source of goodness,  
through him who is alive and reigns with you  
and the Holy Spirit,

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one God, now and for ever.

### PRAYERS

Mighty God,  
in whom we know the power of redemption,  
you stand among us in the shadows of our time.  
As we move through every sorrow and trial of this life,  
uphold us with knowledge of the final morning  
when, in the glorious presence of your risen Son,  
we will share in his resurrection,  
redeemed and restored to the fullness of life  
and forever freed to be your people. Amen.

Living God,  
long ago, faithful women  
proclaimed the good news  
of Jesus' resurrection,  
and the world was changed forever.  
Teach us to keep faith with them,  
that our witness may be as bold,  
our love as deep,  
and our faith as true. Amen.

Creator of the universe,  
you made the world in beauty,  
and restore all things in glory  
through the victory of Jesus Christ.  
We pray that, wherever your image is still disfigured  
by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed,  
the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear in justice, love, and peace,  
to the glory of your name. Amen.

O God, your Son remained with his disciples after his resurrection,  
teaching them to love all people as neighbors.  
As his disciples in this age,  
we offer our prayers on behalf of the universe  
in which we are privileged to live  
and our neighbors with whom we share it.

... *Petitions...*

Open our hearts to your power moving  
around us and between us and within us,  
until your glory is revealed in our love of both friend and enemy,  
in communities transformed by justice and compassion,  
and in the healing of all that is broken. Amen.

Holy God,  
you have called us to follow in the way of your risen Son,  
and to care for those who are our companions,  
not only with words of comfort, but with acts of love.  
Seeking to be true friends of all,

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we offer our prayers on behalf of the church and the world.

... *Petitions...*

Guide us in the path of discipleship,  
so that, as you have blessed us,  
we may be a blessing for others,  
bringing the promise of the kingdom near  
by our words and deeds. Amen.

Sisters and brothers in Christ,  
God invites us to bring our doubts and fears,  
our joys and concerns, our petitions and praise,  
and offer them for the earth and all its creatures.

... *Petitions...*

Receive these prayers, O God,  
and transform us through them,  
that we may have eyes to see and hearts to understand  
not only what you do on our behalf,  
but what you call us to do  
so that your realm will come to fruition in glory. Amen.

Living and gracious God,  
through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ  
you have brought us out to a spacious place  
where we are called to live as those redeemed.  
Empower us by your spirit to keep your commandments,  
that we may show forth your love  
with gentle word and reverent deed  
to all your people. Amen.

### LECTIONARY NOTES 1

#### **Acts 10:44-48:**

- "even on the Gentiles" - this is the key phrase here. This is a second-Pentecost experience of sorts, and the focus is on the receiving of the spirit by those who are outside the Jewish faith. This had been a stumbling block for Peter - he had been mostly in mission to the Jews. God is always expanding our sense of who belongs, and who is our neighbor, and who is our brother and sister.
- "Can anyone withhold?" How often do we try to withhold others from receiving what God would give to them? We like to decide who gets grace and mercy and love and acceptance, and even membership into our communities of faith. We take dangerous steps in so doing, taking God's role instead of our own. Can we withhold what the Holy Spirit would give?

#### **Psalms 98:**

- Oof - watch out - there's "[God's] holy arm!" I just don't get this image - it's like "macho man" warrior-God imagery. Doesn't do much for me.

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- "Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy." Great imagery. How would you create this image?
- This is a psalm of joy and thankfulness for God's action in someone's life, in the life of a whole people. How do you celebrate as an individual? As a community? Do we celebrate as nations? A world? How do we express our joy in God? Through worship? Action?

### 1 John 5:1-6:

- "loves the parent loves the child." That's interesting logic from John - Love God, love Christ. Love God, love humans - we're God's children too, right?
- loving God = obeying God's commandments. That's the connection John makes. So, what does the way you choose to obey God's commandments say about how you love God? Looking at it from this direction, I'm afraid sometimes it would look like I don't love God nearly as much as I claim!
- "[God's] commandments are not burdensome." We don't act like this, do we. We act as though we are martyrs when we adhere to God's commands.

### John 15:9-17:

- Again, as [last week](#), 'abide' is from the Greek *meno*^, which means literally "to stay at home, to stay where one is, to not stir." It has the sense of "lasting" or "remaining." We are 'at home' in God's love, not wanting to stir from that place. And God is at home in us, if we let God.
- "to lay down one's life for one's friend." What a gift indeed. Perhaps someday we'll find ourselves in a literal situation of needing to lay down our life. But if not, in what metaphoric ways are we called to lay down our lives for our friends?
- Jesus calls the disciples friends - what an honor!
- "love one another" - in this intimate scene, Jesus so wants his disciples to love one another. In your community of faith, do you, the disciples of Jesus, love one another, as friends? True friends?

## LECTIONARY NOTES 2

### REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

The theme of love continues in the Lectionary this week, but the "one another" that we are called to love expands radically. In the Psalm all creation is called to praise God for the righteousness and justice that God brings to all people. In the Acts reading, Peter preaches to a group of Gentiles, with the result that they, too, receive the Holy Spirit, revealing that God's love, grace and salvation is for all people, not just the Jews. With these two readings in mind, John's letter, which calls us to love all of God's children, becomes even more challenging because we realise that the whole creation is God's child, and all people who inhabit God's world are God's children – which means that there is no one to whom we can legitimately deny love. Finally, in the Gospel, the call to love one another must now be understood to go beyond just our companions in the faith. The "one another" whom we are called to love through the sacrificial laying down of our lives, now includes all people and all creatures. The moment we begin to try and exclude some people from our love, for whatever reason, we have failed to truly embrace the love of God. But, when God's love flows through us to all – including even our "enemies" – we

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know the vibrant, abundant life of resurrection, and we become life-bringing agents of God's love to the world.

### CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

**GLOBAL APPLICATION:** The radical inclusivity of the Gospel is one of the hardest truths to embrace. In so many ways the world is easier to manage and navigate when we can easily distinguish between friend and enemy, between "us" and "them". National boundaries and patriotism become important lubricants for this divided world. Personal agendas and interest groups are easier to maintain, and the world is much simpler when we only have to love those who love us, who are like us and who are part of our group. In this view of things, we can make economic, military and even environmental decisions easily, because we only have to worry about ourselves and "our world". Unfortunately, we inevitably discover the fallacy in our thinking when we see the connectedness of everything, and we begin to see that our actions have consequences for others, even as theirs do for us. Our divisions are, ultimately, illusions, and so the Gospel call to love all people is really the most common of sense. When we begin to love sacrificially, we become more mindful of how our decisions and actions and agendas impact others, and as we start seeking to live in love, the world becomes a more peaceful, loving and co-operative place – which ultimately benefits us. If there is anything that gives a clear picture of resurrection life it's love – and as we learn to love sacrificially, as Jesus did, we bring life to others and we enjoy a more vibrant, abundant life ourselves. The challenge, of course, is that the onus is on us, as Christ followers, to be the first to embrace Jesus way of love, no matter the cost, in order to prophetically reveal the power of love to the rest of creation.

**LOCAL APPLICATION:** The global call to love described above can only really be expressed and lived locally – but it here where the real power of love can make a lasting impact on the world. It starts in our homes as we begin to learn to lay down our lives for our parents, children and spouses. Then, as our love expands, we begin to learn to lay down our lives for our faith community, loving our Christian sisters and brothers as Christ loves us – embracing worship styles that may not be meaningful for us, giving up our agendas for the sake of others who need God's love revealed to them, treating one another with grace and kindness instead of criticism and judgment. Then, inevitably, as our love grows, it will expand beyond the walls of our churches into our neighbourhoods, to touch those who are lonely, impoverished, hungry, abused, homeless, and displaced. As this happens, our love becomes like a pebble dropped into a pond, raising ripples that expands ever outward to make the world a more just and gracious and peaceful place. All it takes is the daily decision to lay our lives down for one another, and allowing that "one another" to continue to grow as God brings new people into our circle of influence. St. Francis' prayer is, perhaps, the best way to think of living this life of love that Jesus calls us to. You may want to sing or pray it this week.

### ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

**Sermons that Work** - an Episcopal church resource. Harry Denman. As we move from Easter to Pentecost our lessons highlight the broad spectrum of what the Christian faith brings to the people of God. The Gospel lesson and the Epistle remind us of the Commandments of God, while in Acts we hear of the necessity of baptism, even for those who may have already received the Holy Spirit. Finally the Psalm awakens us to one of David's great songs of praise. Each Lesson is a message within itself. Today, though, let us concentrate on the message of 1 John and the Gospel of John: "For the love of God is this..."

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2006/05/21/6-easter-b-2006/>  
[www.churchnewsireland.org](http://www.churchnewsireland.org)



**"As the Father Has Loved Me,"** the Rev. Dr. James C. Howell, *Day 1*. "I do want to take you into a room, a flicker of a few candles battling the dark. It's small, stone, chilly; Jesus and some guys, not chosen for their stellar spiritual resumes, but just some guys, a few fishermen, a tax collector, almost as if Jesus wanted to make the point that anybody would do, anybody could be a disciple, anybody who could listen. It's the hearing that matters: you can't see me, and I can't see you, but words matter. Have you ever been told "I love you" for the first time? Or after the carnage of hurt, have you ever been told, "I forgive you"? Or have you ever sat in a waiting room and the doctor enters and says, "It's malignant" or "It's benign"? It's what we hear, words that pass, not the chance of how we or anybody else looks, even Jesus. Martin Luther said that the organ of faith is the ear; we walk by faith not by sight, because what we see misleads. "Show me the money," we say! We fawn over what is big, or shiny--but wise old Gandalf told Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings*, "All that is gold does not glitter."

"So here's the gold for our ears. Jesus, who's just washed their feet, shared the Passover supper, with the profound poignancy of one who knows they won't ever be together for an evening ever again, opens his mouth, and we hear him say, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you."

[http://day1.org/1255-as the father has loved me](http://day1.org/1255-as-the-father-has-loved-me)

**"What's Love Got to Do With It?"** Dianne Bergant, CSA, *America*

"Love one another as I love you" (Jn 15:12)

The command to love is found in the report of the Last Supper discourse. This exhortation is considered the heart of Jesus' teaching, certainly in John's Gospel. Love for others is here grounded in God's love for Jesus and Jesus' resulting love for us. It is a profound message, one that we have heard again and again. It may be so familiar that we slip over its obvious meaning without considering some of its most challenging implications...

Jesus' self-emptying love points back to the self-emptying love of God and forward to the kind of self-emptying love expected of us. We are to love one another in the way he loved us. It may seem strange to be commanded to love, for as the lyrics of one song so rightly put it, "I can't make you love me if you don't." Perhaps it is the radical nature of this love that requires a commandment.

Self-emptying love does not always come easily, as today's reading from Acts demonstrates

[http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article\\_id=2985](http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=2985)

**"Where Can You find True Friendship?"** John R. Donahue, SJ, *America*:

Whoever is without love is without God, for God is love. (1 Jn. 4:8) "The Gospel continues the exhortation "to abide," simply stated: "remain in my love." In John a command is always based on a prior experience of grace, so Jesus says simply, "love one another as I have loved you," and then points to the summit of love, laying down one's life for friends. This part of the farewell discourse clearly echoes Jesus' words and actions at the Last Supper, when he washes his disciples' feet as an example and first gives them the new commandment that they love and serve "one another as I have loved you" (Jn. 13:1). The little "as" underscores one of the deepest Johannine insights. The immense gift of love



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precedes and makes possible discipleship. The second reading captures this perfectly: "In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins" (1 Jn. 4:10).

"Jesus then goes on to call his disciples friends. John's readers would immediately recognize friendship as the highest form of love, expressed by popular Hellenistic sayings such as "friends hold all things in common," or "friends are other selves," or "share a single soul" (cf. Acts 2:44; 4:32). Communality of heart and soul united early Christians. Friendship was expressed through hospitality, shared meals and bearing one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2)."

[http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article\\_id=2085](http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=2085)

**"But I chose you"** Richard Fairchild. *Scroll down.*

I remember being the neglected one as a child. When the kids at the playground picked captains and chose sides to play baseball - or any other game in fact, I was always the last to be chosen - if I was chosen at all - and even when chosen I was rarely allowed to play.

It was pretty ego bruising thing to not be chosen... to be left out, to be considered the least valuable person...

But what a different feeling to be among the chosen... when one day the soccer coach chose me to play on his team - not because I was good - but mainly because he was good, because he knew that it meant a lot to me to be chosen...to be a player...

<http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/b-ea06sn.php>

**The Holy Spirit as a Pre-Existing Condition**, the Rev. Pendleton Peery.

Cornelius--a spiritual, but not religious Gentile living in Caesarea of some importance in the Roman legion and a member of the Italian Cohort--Cornelius had a vision. It was a clear vision...to send for an apostle of Jesus named Peter.

Peter--a devout and faithful Jew and an ardent follower of Jesus the Christ--Peter had a vision, too. His was not so clear. In fact, it was downright bizarre.

[http://day1.org/3820-the\\_holy\\_spirit\\_as\\_a\\_preexisting\\_condition](http://day1.org/3820-the_holy_spirit_as_a_preexisting_condition)

### CHILDREN

**Worshipping with Children**, Easter 6B, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown, 2012.

<http://worshippingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2012/04/year-b-sixth-sunday-of-easter-may-13.html>

**"Sermon of the Week,"** Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Coloring Pages, Puzzles.

<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

**"As I Have Loved," "Children of God,"** Children's Time, in Sermons and Liturgies. Richard J. Fairchild. (Scroll down in liturgies to find Children's Time.)

<http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/b-ea06sx.php>

**HYMN SUGGESTIONS**

Christ For The World We Sing  
Christ From Whom All Blessings Flow  
Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us With Your Love  
O Love Of God, How Strong And True  
All Are Welcome (YouTube video)  
Make Me A Channel Of Your Peace (YouTube video)  
You Are  
God Of Justice (YouTube video)  
As We Gather (Whatever We Do)  
A New Commandment (YouTube video)