

Homily for the Sixth Sunday of Easter – May 6, 2018

Mark Twain wrote that the two most important days in your life are the day you were born and the day you found out why. Well you are already born ... so let's find out why.

We will begin to do that in this homily by seeing love as a decision, a commitment, a mission. If you are wondering where the homily is going, that's it.

Before you leave this building our aim is to see love as a decision, a commitment, a mission, and that is a good start to answer why you were born.

We begin with a question: Can you grow roses with a monkey wrench? Those of you with a green thumb who enjoy working in the garden, or get a dirt high by planting flowers in your backyard answer that question: "can you grow roses with a monkey wrench?" Of course not!

The rose like any flower grows naturally over time slowly the way nature intended. You can't force or command roses or any flower to grow. Yet here in the gospel Jesus commands us to love. What a puzzling statement.

Maybe we need to teach Jesus God about love. Look Jesus love is a feeling we cannot command a feeling. Anymore than we can command roses to grow with a monkey wrench.

Boy Jesus God you sure have a lot to learn. Or do we?

We know what love is our world has taught us. Our culture has conditioned us. Love is a feeling? And how Jesus can you command a feeling?

Isn't love all about romance? Like the royal wedding about to take place in London. You know between Prince Harry and Meghan?

Isn't love all about falling in love? Isn't that what all the love songs sing?

Doesn't love simply happen the feelings are there or they are not there.

We don't choose our feelings...at least right away. We can't plan our feelings for today...or tomorrow. The conclusion is God is wrong...

No we are WRONG Where?

Stop and think...liking someone is in the feelings. Longing someone is in the will.

Love means choosing...deciding...freely. The confusion about liking and loving causes many problems today.

For example if we identify married love only with romance is that a solid foundation for a lifelong marriage? So too if we identify married love only with feeling...are we willing to base our life on another's feeling?

What happens when feelings change? Does that mean the marriage is at an end? Or as so often signals the start of a new more mature and honest relationship.

Love in the Christian understanding is a decision to seek the good, of another... especially the spiritual good. If liking feelings are there so much the better. If the feelings are not there you have a chance to stretch your and heart and deepen your spirit.

Love is in the will...like is in the feelings. Feeling is about liking someone...and that is not entirely under our control. Jesus is not commanding us to "like" everyone.

Real love, the kind talked about in the gospel ...is not a feeling, but an act of the will...a decision...a commitment to act for the benefit of the other...no matter how we feel about hat person.

So in the gospel Jesus is commanding us to love others...even those we don't particularly like. When we struggle with loving another person try imagining two things: Jesus saying " If I can put up with this man or woman so can you"

And the second things is to imagine Jesus liking you even before you get to his loving you. Sometimes people think God might love me, but he doesn't particularly like me. No He likes you, never grows tired of you, fascinated by you.

Okay to summarize like has more to do with feelings. Love has more to do with will. And Jesus is not commanding us to like everyone. But to love as he did. Isn't that why you were born?