

REMANING RESOLUTE IN OUR LOVE

Part 1: Loving God

Father Raymond Harris

Homily prepared for delivery.

Part of the series, "Victorious: Risen with Christ"

Holy Family Catholic Church

Randallstown, Maryland

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Holy Mass at 10:00 am – May 10, 2020

Acts of the Apostles 8:5-8,14-17 + Psalm 66:1-7, 16,20

1 Peter 3:15-18 + John 14:15-21

RESOLUTE AS WE PREPARE TO REOPEN

After nine weeks of quarantine, we are beginning the phases of reopening, to return to our parish campus and to the sacraments. Our parish needs to do two things for these plans to be successful. First, we need to be generous in following the protocols established by the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Archdiocesan officials have consulted with medical professionals and other experts to provide a safe environment for reopening. Second, we need volunteers to serve as monitors while the church building is open to ensure compliance with the protocols and to sanitize areas when necessary.¹ I will speak more about that after this Holy Mass.

RESOLUTE IN OUR FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE

As we begin the sixth week of the Easter season, we continue to consider the implications of being victorious people because we are risen with Christ. Like the Samaritan Christians in the First Reading, we have been "baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (*Acts 8:16b*). That is, with the authority that the Lord Jesus has given to the Church to make disciples by baptizing them, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (*Matthew 28:19*). We are experiencing an ongoing participation in Easter, the Passover of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. *Romans 6:3-11*). We are immersed into God's life. We are identified with Christ and how He is saving us from sin and death. We are incorporated into the Church of Christ.²

Like the Samaritan Christians, many of us have received another outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Confirmation (cf. *Acts 8:14-17*). This is our ongoing participation in Pentecost, when the early Church was filled with the Holy Spirit to proclaim the marvelous works of God, and invite all people to follow Jesus as Lord within the fellowship of His Church (cf. *Acts 2:1-41*). Being "sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit" is an experience that can never be erased from our souls.³

The divine gifts of faith, hope, and love equip us to be victorious in any circumstance, including this circumstance that we have never seen before.⁴ Once it is over, we never want to see again.

The temporary inability to worship during Holy Mass in person and to receive our Lord in Holy Communion is a tremendous sacrifice for you. It is a sacrifice for me, and it breaks my heart. However, we have not been left like orphans (cf. *John* 14:16-18). As I have said often during this period, the grace of God has never been suspended! I have encouraged our parish and others to offer the Prayer During a Pandemic.⁵ We are praying to be resolute in our faith, hope, and love.

During the Second and Third Sundays of Easter, we reflected on being resolute in our faith. Faith enables us to believe in God, accepting what He has revealed through the ministry of the Church since God is truth.⁶

During the Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Easter, we reflected on being resolute in our hope. Hope enables us to trust that God's promises will be fulfilled in our lives as we cooperate with His providence.⁷

This Sunday and next Sunday, we will reflect on being resolute in our love. Love is defined by how God relates to us since God is love. It is through our love for God that we can love ourselves and others appropriately.⁸

GOD'S LOVE FOR US – EXPRESSED BY HIS COMMITMENT

The love of God for us is unconditional, unchanging, and unlimited. God loved us before we knew about His existence or could return love to Him. God pursues us with untiring love, inviting us to receive the healing remedy that delivers us from what can destroy us. We use our freedom to acknowledge in our actions that God is the Source of our lives and will sustain us throughout our lives - within time and for eternity.

What a tremendous gift that God has given to us! God has given us a great dignity as people created in God's image. God has given us a glorious destiny, to share in an eternal communion with Him that cannot be broken by death. The gift of divine Love has been offered and invites a response.

GOD'S LOVE FOR US – EXPRESSED BY HIS COMMANDMENTS

Some people translate the right attitude that God loves us no matter what we do with the wrong action that God loves us so it does not matter what we do. But accepting the truth that God loves us means that we trust that God promotes what I for our well-being and salvation. God wants to protect us from anything that seeks to demean our great dignity and destroy glorious destiny.

Therefore, obeying His commandments is not merely an obligation to fulfill, but a demonstration of our love for God.

OUR LOVE FOR GOD – EXPRESSED BY OUR COOPERATION

“Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments’” (*John* 14:15). We are grateful for the unconditional love of God for us. Can we express this gratitude by expressing our unconditional love for God?

What are some examples of doing that? We strive to keep His commandments whether they are comforting, consoling, or challenging. We strive to keep His commandments whether we initially appreciate the answer to our prayers or not. We strive to keep His commandments whether the circumstances are delightful or difficult.

Loving God wholeheartedly—which is the context of loving ourselves and others appropriately—is an act of the will. We may experience good feelings as we engage in loving actions. However, Christ does not teach to wait until that happens before we do so. To love is an act of the will.

GOD ENABLES US TO BE RESOLUTE IN OUR LOVE

The Lord Jesus makes a commitment to help us to do it. He stands before God the Father interceding for us (cf. *John* 14:16-18; *Hebrews* 7:25). In the name of Jesus, God the Father continuously sends the Holy Spirit to strengthen our faith in God, our hope in His promises, and our love for His will (cf. *Romans* 5:1-5).

God is our Advocate (cf. *John* 14:16)! The Greek translation of this word means, “the one who is standing by your side to help.”⁹ The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God the Father and the Spirit of God the Son, and their bond of life and love. We live in union with this unbreakable bond. We can be resolute in our love because God is resolute in His love for us. This is always the reason “to cry out to God with joy” for these gifts which equip us to be victorious people (cf. *Psalms* 66:1).

Reverend Raymond Lee Harris, Jr., Holy Family Church, 9531 Liberty Road, Randallstown, Maryland 21133. All rights reserved, 2020.

ENDNOTES

1. <https://www.archbalt.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/PhaseIGuidelines-v2.pdf>; <https://www.holyfamilyrandallstown.org/reopening>.
2. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [hereafter, *Catechism*] #1262 – #1270.
3. *Rite of Confirmation*; *Catechism* #1304.
4. *Catechism* #1266, #1613.
5. <https://www.holyfamilyrandallstown.org/wepray>.
6. *Catechism* #1814.
7. *Catechism* #1817.
8. *Catechism* #1822.
9. <http://www.word-sunday.com/Files/a/6Easter-a/A-6Easter-a.html>.