

Sunday16-B5 homily by Fr. Gabor

First read Jeremiah 23:1-6; Ephesians 2:13-18; Mar 6:30-34.

Today's readings, and in particular the Gospel reading, is a great reminder that God's love is a parental love in its very essence. If you are a parent or a grandparent you will understand how God the Father's love works through Jesus who is the face of the Father and therefore how we should also love each other. Today's readings show many different ways in which the Father's parental love manifests itself.

The first reading tells us that God the Father wants to keep us together as a family or gather us back into unity if we are scattered; something that every parent would want for their families. I am sure you agree that spiritual disunity and fighting between people is a sad thing, especially when it happens within family and among relatives. God is just as concerned about it as you would be as a parent. So God the Father sends out shepherds to bring back together and reunite the people of Israel, both the chosen people of Israel and the adopted Israel, which is the Church. Jeremiah in the first reading also tells us that the Father wants us to practice honesty and integrity just as you as a parent want your child to be an honest character and a person of integrity, who practices what he or she preaches.

In the second reading St. Paul reminds us of how far the heavenly Father would go to reunite us with himself, ie. that he would even sacrifice his own Son. There are fall outs not only between siblings, but also between children and their parents, but that also means we need to be reconciled. Humanity's big fall out with God was the Fall in the Garden of Eden, which had a catastrophic consequence to humanity's relationship with God the Father: Adam and Eve left the Father's presence. I was thinking about that if the Father is a parent how could he banish his children to life outside the Garden of Eden? Well, if you carefully read the book of Genesis one thing becomes clear: 1. Adam and Eve never say sorry for what they had done, but instead they start blaming the serpent and each other. Therefore there can be no reconciliation, because for reconciliation first of all the guilty party would have to express repentance and say sorry. I am sure God as a parent was eagerly waiting for Adam and Eve's repentance and words of apology, but they don't do it and in fact it is possible that they leave the Garden by their own decision, because of feeling ashamed. Remember the first thing they do after the fall is that they hide themselves from God. St. Paul in his letter reminds us that the Father later on would sacrifice even his own Son, just so that we can be reconciled with Him. This shows how eager the Father as a parent has always been to be at peace both with us and with Adam and Eve. I am sure there have been many occasions when you as a parent got upset about what your child has done, but after all you always looked forward to the return of your prodigal son or daughter or

even put aside what happened just to have your child back even without their apology. This is what happens when Jesus dies on the cross.

Then in the Gospel reading we hear about how much Jesus cares about his disciples, whom He calls his children on one occasion in Mark's Gospel (10:24). He himself tells Philip in John's Gospel that the one who sees Him sees the Father (John 14: 9). This means that Jesus shows us the Father's parental love. He loves us with the heart of the heavenly Father and in the power of the Holy Spirit. This parental love is obvious when he gives them authority to show His love and mercy as they go on their first missionary journey, as we heard in last Sunday's Gospel, and now as they return from their missionary journey, very tired and drained, He tells them to have a rest, and He himself goes out to teach the busy and possibly noisy crowd who were deeply affected by the missionary work of the disciples and want even more. A good parent would enable his or her children to do things beyond their present ability, but would also provide a home where they can always return to rest. He or she would also be compassionate towards his or her children if they are spiritually hungry or undernourished as we heard Jesus did, and would nourish them and encourage them spiritually by teaching them about things of heaven, as Jesus did.

So all in all parental love is the essence of God's love.

We all believe that we need to become what or rather whom we receive in Holy Communion. This means we are to become who Jesus is, and that also means that our love should also be like a parental love if want to show God's love to others. It is not about patronising others, but about doing what a parent would do: strive to create unity, encourage others to be honest characters and people of integrity, give up everything we can to be reconciled with God and one another even if we have to suffer for it, and show compassion with those who are hungry spiritually or tired. But in the meantime we should also rest because without rest we cannot have the energy to love always as a parent loves.