

Homily Ideas for Sunday May 2, 2010

The Fifth Sunday after Easter C

May 1-2, 2010

From the reading from Acts: "...reported...how [God] had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles."

From Psalm 145: "The Lord is good to all and compassionate toward all his works."

From Revelations: "Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race."

From John: "This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

- ❖ Today is the Fifth Sunday of the Easter Season and the day after the feast of St. Joseph the Worker. Is there a connection between them? Of course there is, otherwise I wouldn't have posed the question.
- ❖ In today's readings we hear about God's coming and dwelling with the human race and about Jesus' disciple's having love for one another. God, in the person of Jesus, dwelt with Joseph and Mary, loved them and was loved by them. And He was supported by the labor of Joseph the carpenter.
- ❖ Appropriately today, we should consider the intersection of love and work. What is the meaning of love in the workplace? Perhaps there is a clue in the opening prayer for the feast of St. Joseph the Worker. It reads in part, "God, the creator and ruler of the universe, has called men and women in every age to develop and use their talents **for the good of others.**"
- ❖ Certainly, we work for our own economic and social benefits. But in love, we are asked by our faith to go beyond our self interests whether our work is in the home, non-paid volunteer work, or work for wages. We are to love those in our workplace and do good for them—co-workers and customers/clients.
- ❖ As workers, I think the first way to express our love for our co-workers and customers is to do excellent work, to produce the outcomes expected of us in ways that exceed the standards for the work.
- ❖ But that is only a small part of love at work. It is much more about our attitudes and resulting relationships with those we work with and for.
- ❖ The other day I saw a niece with her five month old daughter. The baby spit up twice and the mother cleaned it up, twice. The baby tried to move and scooted slightly backward and we

commented on how she was beginning to move and would soon change the movements to propel herself forward. She cried and she was picked up and comforted. If the child were six or seven and doing these things, chances are the reaction would be much different. The mother's love was expressed one way at five months and would be expressed another way at ten years, fifteen years, and twenty years and beyond. Parents see the present and have a vision of the future for the child; they act in the present with a view to creating the future adult.

- ❖ In a very real way, at work we need to act with the kind of love parents have for their children, particularly their adult children. Co-workers, whether peers, subordinates, or supervisors, should be treated as respected and beloved relatives. They should be accepted and worked with as people worthy of our consideration and our repeated efforts to help them succeed in their responsibilities. As peers, we should offer feedback and suggestions about how their work appears to us and how it affects us. As supervisors, we should provide truthful evaluations of performance with directions and help for the improvement of that performance
- ❖ When evaluating ourselves we tend to judge our own motives as good and our actions as well intended regardless of the impact on others. When others' behaviors impact us negatively, do we need to be careful not to automatically assume that the motive behind their actions was harmful? Can we give them the same benefit of the doubt that we give ourselves and keep open the lines of communication to better understand one another?
- ❖ I think evaluations are moments for expressing love and respect. If there is love and respect, then the evaluator would want employees to improve and would help each employee to see and appreciate the positive aspects as well as the flaws in his/her performance. Out of respect for the employee as a person, the evaluator would seek to learn how and why the employee sees their performance as acceptable. Then, the evaluator should assist the employee in using his/her strengths to overcome the flaws identified in his/her performance.
- ❖ Those receiving an evaluation can show love by assuming there is caring behind the evaluation given. They would seek to understand what actions or failures on their part underlay the "needs improvement" aspects of the evaluation. They would seek to learn so as to improve. They need to see and accept evaluation and criticisms as efforts by others to support their own development.
- ❖ Beyond the things directly connected with the work we do, there are the attitudes we carry and express. Those who love others pray for them; we can pray for our bosses, our peer co-workers, and those we may supervise. Those who love others forgive them the slights and hurts they give to us; we can forgive those who hurt us without being asked to forgive. We can seek to be reconciled with those from whom we are estranged.
- ❖ Love at work? Yes, most certainly. We can imitate St. Joseph. Most simply, perhaps, we can cheerfully greet those with and for whom we work. We can smile, say "Thank you," offer to help when someone is overloaded, look for good intentions, admit errors or faults, seek to improve, and do our work well.