

**SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
MAY 1, 2016**

"TEACH ME, JESUS"

**THE REV. MARK P. BRUESEHOFF
ST. JOHN, OCEAN CITY, NJ**

Our simple EASTER PRAYER for today: *TEACH ME, JESUS!* After all, if we are going to be *WALKING WITH JESUS* through this Easter season, we need someone to teach us the way. And how does Jesus respond? He says, *"The Holy Spirit will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you."* When we call, He answers! When we come together, He is with us! Every day is a celebration of Jesus in our lives. Every Sunday is a celebration of Jesus' resurrection. Every day is a day to say: CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED! ALLELUIA!

The Sunday sermon may seem like a rather odd place to talk about television commercials! But the people who create commercials know that touching our emotions, sells their products. They have used emotions as a sales technique since advertising began. An ad for Palmolive soap from 1921 asked women, *"Would your husband marry you again?"* The implication is that he would, but only if you keep yourself clean with Palmolive soap.

On a gut level, some of these ads work! But if we think about it, the emotions we feel while watching a commercial are not real. They are more like a bumper sticker on the back of the car. STUCK ON, but not permanent! And so we either laugh or cry or simply say, *"How stupid can you get?"*

In today's Gospel Jesus says, *"Those who love Me will keep My word, and My Father will love them, and We will come to them and make Our home with them."* And a little further on Jesus says, *"The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you."*

Those TV Commercials, instead of trying to make us feel something about a product, ought to TEACH us how that product or that technology can be helpful in everyday living.

Jesus calls us to love! Jesus teaches us how to love! Jesus teaches us what it means to love and be loved! Today's Gospel invites us to think about something that should not be STUCK ON, but should be taught and learned as permanent: LOVE FOR JESUS AND LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER. In the Gospel Jesus tells us those who love Him will keep His word, will follow Him faithfully. That means our love is real! In teaching us to love, Jesus is not only calling for feelings, but also for actions.

If we love Jesus, we are not necessarily feeling warm and fuzzy, but we are working to apply His example and His teachings to our daily lives. As one commentary puts it, *"To love Jesus is to keep His commandments. To keep His commandments is to love Jesus."*

It is not stated as an order: *"If you love Me, keep My words."* No, Jesus says, *"Those who love Me WILL keep My word."* That difference is important! DOING will come from BELIEVING! SHARING GOD'S LOVE comes from believing that I am SAVED BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH! To take our own Mission Statement and turn it inside out!

To live the Christian life means that it is not just a bumper sticker STUCK ON or a commercial meant to get an emotional response. To live the Christian life is to learn by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit that I am saved by grace through faith. And now that I have been taught, I can live by that teaching and serve my God, by sharing His love in the life that I live. And so we pray: Teach me, Jesus!

But let's talk about what *"keeping Jesus' word"* really means. For one thing, keeping Jesus' word does not come automatically. It does not happen without thought. It is not natural for us to love our enemies and to pray for those who hate us or do us wrong. When Jesus teaches us to live and love we have to take this thing one step at a time, and very often we have to stop and think about what we are doing, while we are doing it. We need to think about how we are going to respond to others, how we act under pressure, how we treat the people with whom we work and play and live every day. It means that Jesus' teachings serve as a guide for our own actions. And the more we have to stop and think about what we are doing, the better we will learn the lessons. And so we pray: Teach me, Jesus!

In addition, keeping Jesus' word does not mean living and loving only when it's convenient or easy. In fact, it often means doing what is inconvenient, putting ourselves out for others. We are Disciples of a Master who talked about going the second mile, and carrying a cross, and turning the other cheek, and giving our coat and our hat to someone who has asked for only our shirt. Not one of these things is convenient or easy! But they are all words of Jesus. And Jesus says, *"Those who love Me will keep My word."*

And part of this, is that Jesus teaches us to love, not only for the good of our relationship with Him, but also for the good of a much larger circle of contacts. When we keep Jesus' word, we are His presence in the world. The only way someone may ever learn of Jesus, is by seeing Him in us. And so we pray: Teach me, Jesus!

And finally, keeping Jesus' word does not necessarily mean feeling rewarded on the spot. Christianity is not always a life of immediate gratification. We have all had the experience of helping someone in need, and feeling their genuine thanks and praise. Times like that leave us feeling all warm and fuzzy on the inside. But sometimes the person we reach out to with care and compassion, does not show appreciation in any way that makes us feel good. Keeping Jesus' word does not necessarily mean an immediate reward! But then, if we live and love, just for the positive points of this moment, we are living and loving for the wrong reason. We are called, as was Jesus, to serve and not to be served. And so we pray: Teach me, Jesus!

So here is the biggest and best and most important lesson to be learned today: *LOVE MAY NOT CHANGE OTHERS, BUT IT CHANGES US!*

When we show love to others in a difficult time, we may not see them change. The biggest change in loving others, in the name of Jesus, is the change that happens to us. And the true teaching and learning moment comes, when we look in the mirror and discover, in living and loving, I am not the same person I was before.

This is a lesson that is not stuck-on like a bumper sticker, or watched like a TV commercial. Jesus says, *"THOSE WHO LOVE ME WILL KEEP MY WORD, AND MY FATHER WILL LOVE THEM, AND WE WILL COME TO THEM AND MAKE OUR HOME WITH THEM."*

And so we pray: Teach me, Jesus!

And to that prayer all God's children say,

Amen.

Sola Deo Gloria!