

## REFLECTION FOR MAY 6, 2018 DONOR APPRECIATION/MOYE MASS

Sixth Sunday of Easter: ACTS 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48; 1John 4:7-10; John 15:9-17

Today's readings are daunting, challenging, and a bit overwhelming. They proclaim the fundamental truth of our faith—"Love one another as I have loved you." How are we to love?

In the first reading, Peter teaches us that God shows no partiality in love and that there are no boundaries to love.

One of the struggles of the early Church was to determine if it was to be a sect within Judaism or if God was calling the followers of Jesus to go outside of those limits and welcome others who believed in Jesus, specifically the Gentiles and pagans. This was a difficult decision.

In today's first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, we see the beginning of that resolution. Eventually Paul would transform the early Church from an exclusively Jewish establishment to a predominantly Gentile and western European reality.

However, in this passage it is Peter who assures Cornelius and his pagan household and friends that "God shows no partiality" and "everyone who fears God is acceptable to God." Peter orders Cornelius, a Gentile, baptized then and there. Lesson taught: New directions come from the Holy Spirit's guidance rather than from merely human decisions.

The second reading contains the single greatest statement about God in the whole Bible, namely, *God is love*. This passage explains the basis of our relationship with God and with one another. Love has its origin in God; Love comes from God and leads back to God. It is a love that holds nothing back; it is undeserved and seeks out that which is lost. It is a love that explains Providence. Since God is love, God's creating act of love is followed by God's constant care of us and all of creation.

Jesus expands on this teaching in his "Farewell Discourse" in the third reading—part of the "table talk" at the Last Supper.

As Jesus says farewell to his disciples he urges them to "abide" or "remain" in his love. They will do this by keeping his commandments. Jesus then gives them a new commandment: love one another as I love you. Jesus' love is in the present tense—it is continuous, ever present, serving, selfless, forgiving, and sacrificial. It is a love that comes from being chosen, that leads to an intimacy with God, "You are my friends;" it is personified by joy, "my joy may be in you and your joy might be complete."

Today we celebrate the feast day of our congregation's founder, John Martin Moye. Father Moye was totally consumed by today's message and lived it daily. He was an ordinary young French priest with an extraordinary zeal for the Scriptures. He believed that loving others meant loving as God loves—showing no partiality. Not content to be simply a good parish priest in his native France, Moye went out into the French countryside, preaching retreats and missions, hearing

confessions and instructing the people, getting to know them and their needs. It didn't take long for him to realize the people's great lack of understanding of their faith.

This was very evident among the poor. The poor lived in small hamlets, raising their children, and barely eking out a living with little access to education. The women and girls were the most uneducated with no prospects of anything improving. Father Moyer showed no partiality. All were acceptable to him. He believed that all should be educated. He believed that meeting the physical, educational as well as the spiritual needs of all people was of the essence of loving them.

Father Moyer prayed over what he had experienced and pondered ways to address the huge needs he had observed. He gathered young women, prepared them in the basics of ministry, and sent them out by ones and twos into the villages. These young women not only taught the young people, they witnessed God's love to everyone in the villages. They were tireless in their work, self-giving in their generosity, caring and sacrificial in their simplicity of living. The commitment of these young women was so great and they were so giving of themselves that the people named them "Sisters of Providence." They had been chosen, they remained in God's love, and Jesus's joy was evident in them.

While in exile during the French Revolution, Father Moyer died in Trier, Germany on May 4, 1793. Never one to sit back and watch, Moyer spent his days ministering to the Prussian, Austrian, and German soldiers and the people of Trier. He visited the wounded, heard their confessions, and said Mass for them. Even though he was only 63 years old, Moyer's body was weakened from a rigorous life of preaching the Gospel in his native France, China, and now in Germany. He contracted typhus in late April of 1793 and after days of agonizing pain, died on May 4. It is said that his funeral was attended by hundreds of people because they recognized what a saintly priest and wonderful friend he was.

Father Moyer and the early Sisters have always been living examples for us of God's love in action.

Their lives compelled our Texas Foundress, Mother St. Andrew, to come to Texas in 1866 and establish schools in Texas, and we eventually expanded to Oklahoma and Louisiana.

Their lives challenged Mother Florence to take up Mayor Elmendorff's offer of 16 acres in 1895 to construct buildings on these grounds within ten years. She took the challenge, raised \$75,00 and built Our Lady of the Lake Academy which eventually became the University. She did it.

Their lives set the example for Mother Philothea Thiry and Mother Angelique Ayres to begin the Worden School of Social Service at the end of the depression and the height of World War II. What boldness!

Their lives inspired countless Sisters to provide quality education, health care, social services, and leadership skills to hundreds of thousands in need.

The readings today and the lives who have gone before us are daunting, challenging, and somewhat overwhelming.

**They proclaim the fundamental truth of our faith—“Love one another as I have loved you.”**

**May we always have the grace and courage to emulate them.**

**Amen.**

**Today we receive new Associates into the Congregation. Our Associates are women and men who know or have come to know the Sisters during their eight months of formation. They are caught up by our charism of trust in Providence and wish to live it in a more dedicated way. Today, on the feast of Blessed John Martin Moye, our current Associates also renew their commitment.**