

**For groups using the new format**

*(Facilitator: Follow the instructions shown in italics.)*

**SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

**May 6, 2018 B**

*(Before starting, allow a few minutes for the members to exchange greetings, then call the group together to prayer.)*

**Facilitator:** Let us take a minute to consciously place ourselves in the presence of God and ask him to help us to hear the Word he wants us to hear this week.

*(Pause for a minute.)*

*(Play a religious song if you are able to do so.)*

**Opening prayer:** *God, in today's first reading, you pour out your Spirit on the Gentiles and remind believers of the command to give and receive your love. Open our hearts as we gather in your name and pour out on us your Holy Spirit and fill us with your love. This we pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

*(Prior to your meeting you are encouraged to read the first and second readings and the commentary on them. After the opening prayer, go to the section titled **Proclamation of the Gospel**, i.e., skip the first and second readings as well as the commentaries.)*

**FIRST READING: Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48**

This reading is sometimes called the “Gentile Pentecost” because in it is described a powerful act of ‘Spirit outpouring’ on the Gentiles—previously thought to be excluded from God’s plan. When Peter sees God at work in Cornelius, he becomes aware that “*in truth, God shows no partiality.*” If God has accepted the Gentiles into his household, so must the Christian Church. Also, Baptism is seen not so much as a cause of God’s love but as a celebration of it.

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM 98**

This psalm takes up the theme of God’s universal love that emphatically declares: “*All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of God.*”

**SECOND READING: 1 John 4:7-10**

This reading uses the word *love* nine times. When it comes to speaking about the central mystery of our faith, speaking about who God is, the most important thing we can say about God is that he *is love*.

Then John says an amazing thing: “*whoever loves is begotten of God and knows God.*” This means, among other things, that the person who lives a loving life knows God – even if he/she is a non-believer. Elsewhere, John says: “*where there is love, there is God*”. The reverse side of the above truth is that *whoever does not love, does not know God*. This refers to believers who do not live lives of love.

The last verse of the reading underlines another important truth, namely that God loved us way before we ever showed our love for God.

**PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL**

**Facilitator:** Let us now listen to this Sunday’s Gospel.

*(A member of the group reads the gospel.)*

*(After the reading pause . . .)*

**Facilitator:** *As we listen to the second reading of the Gospel, let’s be aware of what draws us in and what might be a challenge for us to embrace.*

**Facilitator:** *Let us now take a moment to quietly meditate on the Gospel text.*

**GOSPEL COMMENTARY**

**Facilitator:** *Let us now read quietly the gospel commentary.*

**GOSPEL: John 14:15-16**

The context for this beautiful teaching on love is the Last Supper. Like the second reading today, this reading uses the word *love* *nine* times.

Jesus makes an amazing statement which we might easily miss. “*I love you disciples with the same*

*intensity of love as my Father loves me.*” Pondering these words could do wonders for us as we struggle to deepen our sense of God’s love for us. Then Jesus says: *Remain in my love*. Even though Jesus will be physically separated from his disciples by his death, they can still experience his love by *remaining in his love and by keeping his commandments*. Jesus summed up *all* the commandments in one word, namely, *love*: love of God, love of neighbor and love of self.

The *sacrificial* dimension of love is also stressed here. Laying down one’s life for another is the greatest form of love. This word of Jesus has to be very consoling for all those who day after day care for loved ones, for the sick and for those who live on the margins of society. Finally, the reading underlines God’s initiative when it comes to our relationship with him. God is always seeking a relationship with us when we show little or no interest in him.

**Facilitator:** Break into small groups. If the group is six or more, break into smaller groups of three.

### FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

1. As you listened to the gospel, what words caught your attention? Why?
2. “*As the Father loves me, so do I love you.*” How can these awesome words of Jesus transform our lives?
3. Do you tend to believe that you have to earn God’s love? If so, why? How hard is it for you to believe that God loves us just as we are with all our sins and failures?
4. What can help to deepen our sense of God’s unconditional love for us?
5. What is Jesus saying to you about how a faithful disciple should act?

### JOURNALING ON THE WORD

*(Gather the group back together.)*

**Facilitator:** Take a few minutes to journal on the word/message you are hearing in this Sunday’s Gospel. You may also wish to use this time to formulate a prayer response to the word. In other words, as you reflect on the Gospel, what do you wish

to say to Jesus about what you are hearing him say? Perhaps you may also wish to express how you may need him to help you to live the message. Learning to pray about the message we hear in the Gospel is a significant step in our spiritual growth.

Let us take a few moments to share what we discern as Jesus’ message to us in today’s Gospel.

### Suggested Reading

On the topic of God’s unconditional love for us, see my book *13 Powerful Ways to Pray*, page 15, *Developing a Positive Image of God and Self*.