

*SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER - MAY 10, 2015*

*"AS THE FATHER LOVES ME, SO I ALSO LOVE YOU. REMAIN IN MY LOVE"*

*KARL BARTH, WAS A SWISS THEOLOGIAN WHO DIED IN 1968 AND IS OFTEN CONSIDERED THE GREATEST PROTESTANT THEOLOGIAN OF THE 20TH CENTURY.*

*HE HAD A PROFOUND INFLUENCE ON OTHER 20TH CENTURY FIGURES, INCLUDING DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, REINHOLD NIEBURH, JURGEN MOLTMANN AND EVEN JOHN UPDIKE....*

*HE ACTIVELY OPPOSED ADOLF HITLER AND THE NAZI REGIME.*

*HE WAS ONE OF THE MOST PROFILIC THEOLOGIAN OF HIS TIME - EMPHASIZING THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD AND THE "INFINITE QUALITATIVE DISTINCTION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.*

*HIS MASSIVE 13 VOLUME WORK CHURCH DOGMATICS IS ONE OF THE LARGEST AND MOST PROFOUND WORKS OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY EVER WRITTEN.*

*THE STORY IS TOLD THAT ON ONE OCCASION BARTH WAS ASKED: "WHAT IS THE MOST PROFOUND THOUGHT THAT EVER ENTERED YOUR MIND?"*

*AFTER SOME REFLECTION HE REPLIED, "THE MOST PROFOUND THOUGHT I HAVE EVER KNOWN IS THE SIMPLE TRUTH:*

*"JESUS LOVES ME, THIS I KNOW, FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO"*

*AND CERTAINLY OUR READINGS TODAY, ESP. THE GOSPEL REMIND US OF THE SAME TRUTH...OUR CREATOR LOVES US, JESUS, THE CHRIST LOVES US....*

***IS THERE ANYTHING MORE PROFOUND?***

***THE STORY ABOUT BARTH IS SO IMPRESSIVE TO ME BECAUSE IT ILLUSTRATES A THEOLOGIAN WHO IS CAPABLE OF MOVING FROM HIS HEAD TO HIS HEART.....HIS THEOLOGY IS INTEGRATED, IT SEEMS... REMINDS ME A LITTLE BIT OF THE LIFE OF THOMAS AQUINAS, THE GREAT CATHOLIC THEOLOGIAN OF THE 13TH CENTURY... NEAR THE END OF HIS LIFE HE HAD A MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE WHILE CELEBRATING MASS AND AFTER THAT DECIDED NOT TO FINISH HIS WORK - HIS SUMMA REMAINS UNFINISHED BECAUSE HE REPORTED SOME TYPE OF REVELATION THAT MADE HIS WORK SEEM LIKE STRAW... OR MORE CONTEMPORARY TIMES....***

***WALTER KASPER IS A RENOWN GERMAN THEOLOGIAN WHO IS NOW A TRUSTED ADVISER TO POPE FRANCIS....***

***I SEE WHERE PAULIST PRESS IS GOING TO PUBLISH HIS COLLECTED WORK IN 18 VOLUMES ON SUCH THEMES LITURGY, THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE, ETC...***

***OF COURSE, THE WORK HE IS MOST KNOWN IS HIS RECENT WORK ENTITLED SIMPLY MERCY....***

***OFTEN CITED BY FRANCIS.....***

***KASPER DESCRIBES MERCY AS THE ESSENCE OF THE GOSPEL AND THE KEY TO CHRISTIAN LIFE....AFTER ALL HIS STUDY AND WRITING HE DISTILLS IT DOWN TO ... THE MERCY OF GOD....GOD'S LOVE FOR US IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING***

*AND, OF COURSE, OUR PRACTICE OF MERCY ALSO...*

*I MUST ADMIT - IT IS HARD FOR ME TO SPEAK ABOUT GOD, THE LOVE OF  
GOD....*

*WE CERTAINLY BELIEVE WE HAVE THE WORD OF GOD.....*

*AND JESUS CHRIST IS THE COMPLETE EXPRESSION OF GOD'S LOVE FOR  
US*

*BUT IT IS SO EASY TO SOUND LIKE WE HAVE GOD IN OUR HIP POCKET...*

*AND WE DON'T BY ANY MEANS....DO WE???*

*AND IN ACTUALITY WE EXPERIENCE GOD EACH IN OUR OWN WAY....*

*AND THE WAYS OF GOD DEFY OUR DESCRIPTIONS..*

*DON'T THEY? AND OUR GOD IS ALWAYS FULL OF SURPRISES!!!*

*I GUESS YOU COULD SAY THAT ONE WAY WE USUALLY EXPERIENCE  
GOD'S LOVE FOR US INITIALLY IS BY WAY OF THE UNCONDITIONAL LOVE  
OF OUR MOTHERS FOR US AND OUR FATHERS ALTHO NOT EVERYONE  
DOES EXPERIENCE THAT....*

*HOPEFULLY WE EXPERIENCE SOMETHING OF THAT*

*E.G. IN THE MOST RECENT TIME MAGAZINE ARTICLE- THEY ASK FAMOUS  
MOMS TO WRITE AN OPEN LETTER TO THEIR CHILDREN*

*SAVANNAH GUTHRIE, CO-ANCHOR OF NBC'S TODAY SHOW TO HER 9 MO.*

*OLD VALE:*

**.....MOSTLY MY BIGGEST JOB IS TO CARE FOR YOUR HEART. THERE IS NO WAY I CAN PROTECT YOU FROM EVERY HURT OR FEAR. THE BEST THING I CAN DO FOR YOU IS WORK HARD TO MAKE REAL TO YOU HOW DEARLY YOU ARE LOVED AND TREASURED. NOT JUST BY ME AND YOUR DADDY BUT BY GOD, WHO KNIT YOU TOGETHER SO LOVINGLY. I WILL NEVER STOP MARVELING AT THE FORTUNE THAT, DEAR SWEET SERENE SMILEY VALE, ARE MY LITTLE GIRL. I WOULD HAVE WAITED FOREVER FOR YOU.**

**HOPEFULLY, WE CAN IMAGINE OUR CREATOR SAYING THE SAME THING**

**AND MORE ABOUT EACH OF US WHEN WE CAME INTO BEING..**

**AND KEEPS SAYING IT TO US EVERYDAY OF OUR EXISTENCE....**

**"HOW DEARLY YOU ARE LOVED AND TREASURED.....YOU WERE KNIT**

**TOGETHER SO LOVINGLY.....I HAVE WAITED FOR YOU FOREVER....**

**I KNOW FOR ME I MOST EXPERIENCE THE SPIRIT OF GOD HELPING ME**

**THROUGH SITUATIONS AND CHALLENGES THAT I EXPERIENCE AS**

**OVERWHELMING BUT WHEN I'M ABLE TO TRUST, HAND THE SITUATION**

**OVER I DO EXPERIENCE A SUPPORT, AN ENERGY BEYOND MYSELF THAT I**

**AM TRUSTING MORE IN MY LIFE....**

**A SPIRIT I CALL UPON MORE AND MORE IT SEEMS.....**

**E.G. SOMETIMES WHEN I HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA WHAT I'M GOING**

**TO SAY IN THIS HOMILY THIS WEEK**

**SO AS I SEE MY OWN FAITH DEVELOP IT IS ENCOURAGING TO HEAR IN**

**THE FIRST READING FROM ACTS THAT PETER SLOWLY GREW IN HIS**

**RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS REALIZATION THAT, AS PATRICIA**

**SANCHEZ IN A RECENT COMMENTARY IN NCR, GOD IS IMPARTIAL AND**

**UNDISCRIMINATING....**

**GOD LOVES AND ACCEPTS ALL WHO STAND IN AWE BEFORE GOD**

**REGARDLESS OF THEIR RACE, GENDER, SOCIAL STATUS, AGE OR  
BACKGROUND.....**

**WE MAY TAKE THAT FOR GRANTED BUT PETER HAD TO LEARN IT AND  
NOT WITHOUT DIFFICULTY...**

**FOR ALL HIS LIFE, PETER HAD KEPT HIS DISTANCE FROM GENTILES -  
BELIEVING THEM TO BE RITUALLY UNCLEAR...**

**HE DID NOT ENTER THEIR HOMES, LET ALONE EAT WITH THEM...**

**YET THROUGH GOD'S INTERVENTION IN THE FORM OF VISIONS OR  
DREAMS PETER WAS ABLE TO GRASP SOMETHING OF GOD'S UNIVERSAL  
SALVIFIC PLAN FOR ALL OF HUMANKIND.**

**THIS WAS A "GAME CHANGER", AS WE WOULD SAY, FOR THE EARLY  
CHURCH.....THE BEGINNING OF A NEW RELIGION, BASICALLY -  
CHRISTIANITY...**

**LET US RECALL WHAT A GIFT EACH ONE OF US IS...**

**AND GIVE THANKS TO THE GIFT GIVER FOR BEING LOVED INTO  
EXISTENCE...**

**LET US PRAY THAT EACH ONE OF US WILL GROW IN APPRECIATION FOR  
THE GIFT THAT WE ARE....AND FOR THE GIFT GIVER...**

**AND, OF COURSE, GIVE THANKS FOR OUR OWN MOTHERS, ALSO...**

**ON THIS DAY**