

## 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday Easter (B)

- The Italian film, "*Life is Beautiful*" vividly portrays the truth of today's Gospel.
- It shows a father convincing his five-year-old son that the concentration camp is an elaborate game that the Nazis had invented to test the Italians.
- Some members of the Jewish community criticised this film because they claimed it made light of the holocaust.
- Writer & director, Roberto Benigni, however, argued that the heart of the film lies in the fact that most parents will do anything to spare their children the reality of evil.
- Most parents who have seen & wept through the film know exactly what he's talking about.
- And if parents could take such risks & go to such lengths for their children, how much more has God done for us in Christ Jesus.
- We are the only world religion to believe that our God took our form & died out of love for us so that we might understand the love God has for us, & the love we are called to have for each other.
- In today's second reading John tells us that God is love.
- Right there - in those three words, 'God is love' - we have the simple summary of the whole of what God wanted to reveal to us & the love we're commissioned to exercise.
- It isn't, however, just any old love Christ calls us to practise.
- It's not about a fleeting feeling or having a warm fuzzy inside.
- Love is not a soft, interior feeling; but rather it is an attitude of will directing us to love actively especially towards others who aren't easily loveable - It is self-sacrificing, self-giving, selfless service of others.
- It is concern & compassion that compels us to commit ourselves to work for the good of others, even at our own cost.
- It is conscientious acceptance of responsibility, not because it is pleasant or feels good, but because it is the right thing to do, no matter how difficult or demanding.
- Jesus tells us today that the character of Christian love is the degree to which it's sacrificial.
- This is a challenging way of working out who we really love, isn't it?
- The people we love are those for whom we are prepared to sacrifice something of ourselves, maybe everything.
- If that's the case we could decide to stop telling people we don't love that we love them.
- The goal of the Christian life is to love everyone, but until we achieve that, the more we lie about love the more we lower its currency.
- It's perfectly acceptable to like, enjoy, be fond of, respect, admire & be grateful to others, & not love them.

- There are a very few people for whom most of us would be prepared to lay down our lives. This criteria sorts out our intimates fairly quickly.
- We could also decide to stop saying we love things, ideas or organisations which cannot love us back.
- I know that many people say that they love their pets; they may even be prepared to sacrifice themselves for them, & their pets can really be devoted to their masters/mistresses, but human beings can only truly love people.
- Jesus did not die for an ideology or an institution - He was put to death because of his uncompromising love for all humanity everywhere.
- If we find ourselves saying we love our pets, house, car, job, our ideology, even our Church more than we love other human beings, then we're in trouble.
- And that's what I like best about the model of loving Jesus gives us in today's Gospel, he talks about us being his friends.
- Sometimes we can hear people lament that they are 'stuck' with their families, & that they prefer their friends.
- It's an instructive moment, usually born out of a bitter & unloving family history.
- We choose our friends, & the strength of any particular friendship is usually found in how we know their history & story, & they know ours, in the way we give them time, attention & affection.
- A true friendship is mutual. Jesus loves us, his friends, enough to know us, be available to us, challenge & forgive us.
- The only thing stopping us from having a deeper relationship with Christ is our desire for it, but Jesus also shows how friends are prepared to give their lives for one another.
- There is a wonderful line from the musical, *Les Miserables*, when the hero, Valjean, is told, 'To love another person is to see the face of God.'
- As Christian people, we believe that every person is created in the image & likeness of God.
- To look upon another person with love & compassion is to see the face of God revealed.
- When we are called to love, we are called to recognise that every person is worthy of love & every person is made in the image of God – even ourselves! We celebrate this every time we come here to Mass.
- The bread & wine symbolise our lives & are then transformed into the body & blood of Christ who offers himself to us in communion & in this way we are transformed into Christ who comes to us & enables us to love in the way he loves us.