

Deacon Lucio Caruso  
Acts 8:5-8, 14-17  
1 Peter 3:15-18  
John 14:15-21

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER  
May 28-29, 2011

How many of you have seen or experienced this?

{On floor level, skit with selected adult and child. }

“How much do you love me?” And the child, with stretched out arms, shouts: “this much”! [Both embrace]

Young children are so free to express and show their love, aren't they?

In our gospel, Jesus begins the discourse with “If you love me”; perhaps His own way of asking us: “how much do you love me?” We might even want to stretch out our arms and shout like that small child – “this much”!!

But Jesus wants more than words or gestures.

This is apparent at the start of the passage - “If you love me, you will keep my commandments,” and near its end - “Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me.”

In other words, Jesus is not only asking “How much do you love me?”, but - “Show me!!!”

So, how do we show Him?  
Today's scriptures offer two ways.

The **first** is obeying Jesus' commandments.

Now Jesus' commandments are more than the "Big Ten"; but living as He lived, loving as He loved, practicing His teachings.

The early disciples, like Philip, showed their love for Christ by bringing a healing touch to the paralyzed and crippled, freeing those possessed by evil - resulting in great joy for the city of Samaria.

Here at Epiphany, I marvel at the many ways we show our love for Jesus. I've never seen a parish bulletin filled with more opportunities to care for others than ads!

Healing blankets, Backside ministry, Plant a Row for the Hungry, Honduras mission, blood drives, Habitat, unemployment support through NET- are a fraction of the many ways we show Jesus that we love Him.

At Catholic Charities, I see our love for Jesus shown everyday - intervening for the poor facing utility cutoffs or eviction, providing a young trafficking victim a chance to escape her slavery, helping parolees re-enter society, bringing joy to an immigrant who gets their long awaited green card...

Jesus' commandments include some hard stuff too - 70x7 forgiveness, compassion, love of enemies, and one we engaged this Lent, non-violence.

I don't know about you, but I really wrestled with my own non-violent response to the news of Osama Bin Laden's death, and what I'd say in conversations.

A **second** way we show our love for Jesus is by being willing to share with others the reason behind the good we do and those values we live; to be ready, as St. Peter urged, to give an explanation for our hope - to tell others about Jesus.

Our actions of charity and justice can be a means of sharing the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection - evangelization.

I've become very conscious of this lately in my work at Catholic Charities. I want my staff and me, without proselytizing, to not hide the fact that it is because of Christ that we do what we do, precisely why we are a "Catholic" social service agency.

I've given the go-ahead, as appropriate and with gentleness and reverence, to share faith with clients; even to ask if they would like us to pray with them.

In our Catholic Charities adoption program, a couple who had dealt with the pain of infertility received a baby. Two weeks later, the birth mom changed her mind. I

had the heart wrenching job to accompany a social worker to their home to take the baby back.

As the social worker was packing the baby's things into the car and securing the car seat, I was left alone with this heartbroken couple. At a loss for words, I asked if I could pray with them and they said yes. We joined hands, encircling the baby.

Then I thought, "God, what do I say now?" But the words came, and I thanked the Lord for the couple's willingness to open their hearts to this vulnerable child and prayed they would remain open to a future placement.

Months later I heard they were expecting! I was almost afraid to call and inquire about the progress of the pregnancy, but the Spirit gave me courage.

They were glad to hear from me, and all was well. Having sought no special treatment, they were as surprised with the pregnancy as I! By the way, they're having twins!!!! We show our love for Jesus by keeping His commandments and telling others about Him.

But now I must give you one of those "fine print" disclaimers - we can't do any of this on our own!

It is only through the gift and power of the Holy Spirit that loving Jesus and showing it is possible.

And so Jesus promises to send the Spirit to dwell within us, that same Spirit that came upon those new believers in Samaria.

"I will ask the Father who will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth."

Along with the Holy Spirit, Jesus has left another gift which shows His love for us - the Holy Eucharist.

One of our beautiful Eucharistic prayers reads:

"When we were lost and could not find the way to you, you loved us more than ever; Jesus, your Son, innocent and without sin, gave Himself into our hands and was nailed to a cross. Yet before He "stretched out His arms" between heaven and earth in the everlasting sign of your covenant, He desired to celebrate the Paschal feast with His disciples."

Christ shows that same love for us time and again in the Eucharist we celebrate.

{Move near altar with bread in hand}

As you come for Communion today, listen as Jesus says to you: {while splitting the bread} "I love you"

{arms out-stretched as you continue: "this much!"

{half of bread in each hand, stay in position for a moment}