

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER - B - MOTHERS DAY

Again I want to wish all of the Mothers present today [as well as those watching via live stream] a most blessed and happy Mother's Day.

In today's Gospel Jesus declares: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."

The same could be said about a devoted mother with regard to her children: She loves them so much that she would be willing to lay down her life for them.

Now, we realize that no mother is perfect (except our Blessed Mother Mary), and some people have had very imperfect mothers, but I am grateful that I had a mother who made many sacrifices for the sake of her five boys.

No matter what kind of trouble we had gotten into, or what difficulties we faced, we could always go to Mom and she would tell us that she loved us.

I will never forget one of the last conversations I had with my Mom before she died.

She was in the hospital and we were reminiscing about all of the adventures we had enjoyed on our weekly days off together.

All of a sudden my Mom grabbed my hand and said, "Thank you for being my friend."

It was truly a beautiful moment of special intimacy with my Mom whom I had always considered to be my friend.

I think of that moment with my Mom whenever I hear Jesus tell his disciples, "I call you my friends."

Jesus doesn't want us to be just his students or his servants.

He wants to be our friend, he wants to share himself completely with us.

It's not enough to just follow Jesus; he wants us to abide in his love, to make his love our home.

Remember the image from last Sunday's Gospel when Jesus said, "I am the vine and you are the branches. Remain in me as I remain in you."

Jesus wants to be the center of our lives, the reason we get up in the morning, and our companion in everything we do throughout the day.

As our friend Jesus is always there to listen to us, to comfort us, and to challenge us.

Jesus sums up the relationship he wants to have with each of us when he says: "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete."

We can only imagine the joy that Jesus experiences knowing that he is loved perfectly by his Father.

We share his joy when we accept in our hearts the mind-blowing, heart-expanding truth that is spoken to each of us as a friend of Jesus: "It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you."

This is the source of a joy and a dignity that nothing can take away from us.

Jesus has chosen me ... Jesus has chosen you ... to be his friend.

We don't have to earn this friendship, we just have to surrender to it.

His love for us is unconditional, flowing from the heart of God the Father who is love.

St. John writes so beautifully in the second reading: "In this is love: Not that we have loved God, but that he has loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins."

Once we embrace Jesus as our truest, closest friend, then we will bear abundant fruit in our love for others.

Our gracious God will do amazing things through those who are his Son's friends.

And this friendship we have with Jesus forms us into a community of friendship with each other.

As the joy that comes from Jesus fills the lives of those who are his friends, that love will overflow, bringing joy and peace to the world.