

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter B  
*The Power of Community*

There seems to be some confusion in American society today that Christianity is only about “me and Jesus” while in fact Christianity has always been about “me and Jesus and the community of believers. The community can be as small as a family or as large as the Universal Church. What has been your experience of Christian community?

The first reading from the Acts of the Apostles gives us an idealistic view of one of the earliest Christian communities. We are told that this community of believers was of “one heart and mind,” that “they had everything in common” and that there was “no needy person among them.”

Historical evidence suggests that Christian communities like this one also gathered on Sundays at someone’s home to pray, to listen to the teachings of the apostles and to “break bread” together like Jesus did with his disciples at the Last Supper. It wasn’t too much different from what we are doing here right now.

In the second reading from the first letter of St. John we hear the author call the community that he is writing to “beloved.” He is writing to this community because some in the community think they are not only better than others but that they also know more than others. As a result St. John’s community was not of “one heart and mind” like the community mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles!

By addressing his community as “beloved,” John indicates that their very identity is based on the two fold love of God and neighbor. He stresses that those who believe in Jesus are begotten by God and are to love all others that are also begotten. To refuse to do so, he suggests, is to live a lie.

We all know that it is not easy to live in community whether that community is family, school, work or a Catholic parish. There is growing evidence that those things that divide us as a nation are also dividing us as a family community, as a school community, as a work community and as a parish community. We can understand then the concern that St. John expresses in the second reading. No community can flourish in the midst of great tensions and divisions.

Whatever communities that we belong to we are not always going to “like” some of the people in those communities. That is fine. Liking is simply an emotion or feeling that we have towards others. That is why Jesus doesn’t command us to like one another. He does however command us to love one another since the type of love he commands comes from our will and not our emotions. He is not commanding the type of love that we have for friends or the type of love that we have for someone that we are sexually attracted to, rather he commands a love that in the New Testament Greek is expressed as “agape.” It is the type of love that reaches out to people who are in need.

It is that type of love that St. John is writing about in the second reading. It is that type of love that forms and builds up communities. The power of community depends upon love.

Are you a source of love in the communities that you belong to?