



Sixth Sunday of Easter (C)
St. Mark's Episcopal Church
May 27, 2019
The Rev. Dr. Christian Brocato, Rector

+May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, O God, our Strength and Redeemer. Amen.

Did you read about or hear the story of Robert F. Smith? Two weeks ago, Mr. Smith gave the Morehouse College commencement address.

Morehouse College, a historically African American college in Atlanta, has been educating young men since 1867. Mr. Smith, the reportedly wealthiest African American businessman in the nation, publically declared that he would grant enough money to cover all the student loan debt of the graduating seniors.

Mr. Smith's generous gift will enable the graduates to experience a kind of freedom that they could hardly have imagined. It is well known that student loan debt is crippling millions of Americans. Having paid my way through my first masters and doctoral programs, I worked to ensure that my debt would be as minimal as possible. I can hardly imagine how challenging it would be to begin one's professional life with thousands of dollars in debt.

What is the point of this story about Mr. Smith? He seems to me to be an amazing human being who by "paying it forward", as the phrase goes, is giving to others because he, himself, has been the recipient of great generosity.

Just think about the impact of such a generous heart that Mr. Smith was compelled to act, and act he did. My hope and prayer is that that gift will encourage those young men to "pay it forward" in life. I hope that they will be generous to others out of a heart of appreciation, gratitude and even love.

Biblically, today's Gospel calls us to love and is a demonstration of God's love in and through Jesus. Jesus gave so that others might have life. Giving of one's self, time, talents and financial means are those things to which we are called once we have said "yes" to be followers of Jesus at Baptism. Jesus gave, and we are called to give as his disciples.

Nearly two years ago now, we began publishing the weekly financials of the Parish in the Sunday bulletin. Those financials have a great deal to do with the generosity of those of you who give in support of the mission of St. Mark's.

Weekly financial reports demonstrate a kind of ebb and flow and are there, in part, because it is giving which enables St. Mark's to do what we do for God's people. Your generosity enables us to help those in need whether our Breakfast Café, support of Degage Ministries, the East Leonard School, SPA days for women and men and the support we give to numerous social service agencies. Your generosity helps us keep the lights on and supports all we do at St. Mark's. Without generous hearts, we simply cannot be generous to others.

Just imagine the heart of one such as Robert F. Smith, a big heart, a giving heart. Just imagine that heart amplified over and over in the heart of God as expressed in Jesus! Just imagine that you and I are called to be faithful stewards of the heart of God in Jesus!

Jesus gave his life, so that we might have life. Today's Gospel reminds us of that life of love, as Jesus points to the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. It is Christ's giving of his life and his resurrection which we celebrate whenever we gather for Eucharist.

Here, we come as individuals to be more than we can be as individual followers of Jesus. Here, we come as community to participate in the love of God in Jesus.

Here we see memorial plaques and the great Celtic cross outside which honor those who gave their lives in the Civil War, the First World War and the Second World War. They gave that we might live in freedom and peace.

Sunday after Sunday, we give God thanks and praise and ask God to hear our prayers. Together, we strive for transformation to be more kind and loving. Here, we seek to learn to be the generous love of God for one another. What that may mean to you and to me is up to us. It is up to each of us to embrace the transforming love of God, make it our own and allow it to shape us into who God calls us to be as Christians.

As we celebrate the Sacrament of the Eucharist we understand as 'thanksgiving', let us savor the sweetness of the generous love of God in Jesus. It is the "sweet sweet Spirit" which enables us to experience that generous love.

The Spirit of God enables us to embrace the journey of the Christian life. It is a journey of generosity, transformation and love, gifts freely given and warmly received. Each of us can decide how to give of ourselves in appreciation for those gifts so freely given by God. Each of us can determine what it might mean to have a truly generous heart.

I invite you this week to reflect on having a 'generous heart'. Think back on today here at St. Mark's. I pray that it will bring a smile even in the midst of the busyness of life.

Friends in Christ, one thing is constant. One thing is sure. The love of God in Jesus is ours. Let us 'pay that love forward', and love as we are loved by God. Amen.