SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
MOTHER'S DAY
HOLY CROSS -- 1994

Rev. Carl F. Thru

IN NOMINE JESU

ST. JOHN 15: 12,13

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

I can think of NO BETTER SCRIPTURE for this MOTHER'S DAY or for all of us in this CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY than these WORDS FROM JESUS on the NIGHT OF HIS BETRAYAL. He spoke them to His disciples shortly before his own BITTER SUFFERING AND DEATH: "THIS IS MY COMMANDMENT, THAT YOU LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU." Jesus wants to SPREAD AN UMBRELLA OF LOVE over His disciples, over parents and children, over communities and nations and all people everywhere to make sure we are PROTECTED AND CARED FOR. He is saying in effect: "WHEN YOU LOVE OTHER PEOPLE - YOUR MOTHER AND FATHER, SISTER AND BROTHER, FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS - they become IMPORTANT TO YOU! You APPRECIATE and ENJOY them and you are willing to do WHATEVER YOU CAN for them.

Jesus is our MODEL AND MENTOR. "IN THIS IS LOVE, NOT THAT WE LOVED GOD BUT THAT HE LOVED US AND SENT HIS SON TO BE THE ATONING SACRIFICE FOR OUR SINS. BELOVED, SINCE GOD LOVED US SO MUCH, WE ALSO OUGHT TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER." As a result of knowing and experiencing this LOVE OF CHRIST, MOTHER TERESA gives us this word of encouragement: "SPREAD LOVE EVERYWHERE YOU GO: FIRST OF ALL IN YOUR OWN HOUSE. GIVE LOVE TO YOUR CHILDREN, TO YOUR WIFE OR HUSBAND, TO THE NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOR.....LET NO ONE EVER COME TO YOU WITHOUT LEAVING BETTER OR HAPPIER. BE THE LIVING EXPRESSION OF GOD'S KINDNESS - KINDNESS IN YOUR FACE, KINDNESS IN YOUR EYES, KINDNESS IN YOUR SMILE, KINDNESS IN YOUR WARM GREETING."

"LOVE ONE ANOTHER!" POWERFUL as this command is, many of us tragically succeed in ignoring it. O, we may give LIP-SERVICE to it on DAYS LIKE MOTHER'S DAY, but few of us expect anyone to REALLY PRACTICE it. Even the GOLDEN RULE, "DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO UNTO YOU" is changed into "DO UNTO OTHERS BEFORE THEY DO UNTO YOU!" After all, you have to look out for NUMBER ONE! During this past year we have seen the revival of ROCK QUEEN TINA TURNER'S singing career as portrayed in the movie, "WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?" That seems to be an apt description of the way things are. Even in spite of the A ID S crisis, little has been done to change the intentions of what STEPHEN STILLS sang about in the 70's: "IF YOU CAN'T BE WITH THE ONE YOU LOVE, LOVE THE ONE YOU'RE WITH!"

MAYBE OUR CONFUSION AND FAILURE to understand the MEANING OF LOVE comes from our failure to believe that we are LOVABLE PEOPLE. I counsel with many, many people who were brought up with the garbage message that they DO NOT MEASURE UP, that they are INADEQUATE, that they seldom if ever DO ANYTHING RIGHT. Well, philosophers and psychiatrists and psychologists and therapists the world over will tell you that the FIRST AND FOREMOST NEED OF ALL HUMAN BEINGS in the need to LOVE AND BE LOVED -- TOTALLY, COMPLETELY, UNCONDITIONALLY! Unfortunately, at least in our relationships with other people, we all too rarely experience THAT KIND OF LOVE. And so it is that OUR LOVE is more often equated with what we can RECEIVE out of a relationship rather than what we can GIVE to it.

Think about it. "GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD SO THAT HE GAVE -- HE GAVE HIS ONLY AND DEAR SON!" It is in the GIVING OF HIMSELF for this WHOLE WIDE WORLD OF OURS which allows us to TRUST that we are loved. HE MAKES US LOVABLE. "WHILE WE ARE YET SINNERS / ENEMIES / CHRIST DIED FOR US!" There are NO LIMITS / NO CONDITIONS! God would "HAVE ALL MEN TO BE SAVED AND COME UNTO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH!" Jesus LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE FOR US, HIS FRIENDS..... This is the way one mother put it: "I HOPE THAT AS MY SON GROWS IN YEARS I CAN COMMUNICATE TO HIM AND SHARE WITH HIM GOD'S LOVE FOR HIM, THE KIND OF LOVE THAT HE KNOWS GOD LOVES HIM, WARTS AND ALL." This is really God's way: "WARTS AND ALL!"

A man once told me that his DOG'S LOVE was the only love in his life we was sure of. He said, "MY DOG ALWAYS GREETS ME WITH ENTHUSIASM -- HE IS RESPONSIVE TO MY TOUCH -- ~~HE IS RESPONSIVE TO MY TOUCH~~ -- HE IS FORGIVING -- HE IS ALWAYS THERE WHEN I NEED HIM! HE LOVES ME WITHOUT CONDITIONS." Now that's all good and well. Animals and pets do add a WOUNDROUS DIMENSION to our lives. My wife loves to go into the pet store and have the BIG BIRDS perch on her arm and NUZZLE their little heads against her. But nothing compares with the LOVE OF A HUSBAND AND WIFE, PARENTS AND CHILDREN, FELLOW CHIRISTIANS opening up their ARMS and HUGGING EACH OTHER and carrying out our Lord's command: "LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU." And they say to each other in countless numbers of ways, "YOU ARE SPECIAL TO ME! YOU ARE PRECIOUS AND MY WORLD WOULD NOT BE THE SAME WITHOUT YOU! IN FACT, I DARE NOT EVEN THINK OF MY LIFE APART FROM YOU."..... Do you hear the words of Jesus, "LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU!"

So today we come into this Church to THANK GOD for CHRISTIAN MOTHERS -- MOTHERS who have modeled for us value of FORGIVENESS and SHARING and CARING. And in one way or another we want them to know that THEY ARE PRECIOUS -- A PRECIOUS GIFT. THANK YOU -- THANK YOU FOR BEING OUR FIRST EXAMPLE OF JESUS, OUR FIRST EXAMPLE OF LOVE -- all the way back there in our MOTHER'S WOMB. ..... A TEACHER once asked his students to write an essay on what they would do if they found out that they had only FIVE DAYS TO LIVE. When the assignments were turned in, some of them talked about TRIPS TO FAR AWAY PLACES -- others talked about GREAT ADVENTURES. But by far the most of them said, "I'D WANT TO DIE AMONG THOSE I LOVE." "I'D GO HOME AND TELL MY FAMILY I LOVE THEM." "I'D WANT US TO HAVE A BIG PARTY AND SEE ALL MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS ONE LAST TIME." ..... I suggest that this might be a good thing for all of us to be about today. How about treating each other as if this were the last day of our life. It was for Jesus, you know, when He gave the commandment: "LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU." ..... And then -- ,then what a PARTY we will share with Him and all the rest of the company of heaven in the REALITY OF THE RESURRECTION.