

**Sixth Sunday of Easter**  
**May 6, 2018**

We have come to one of the most exuberant and vibrant times of the year. This weekend is first communion Sunday at Sacred Heart and St. Alexander's. It is the Easter season, graduations are about to take place and now it is springtime when the whole world around us explodes with life.

And in the middle of all of this we hear the gospel today where Jesus says: I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. I've got to say that this is my most favorite passage in all of Scripture. That's what God wants for us. He wants our joy to be complete. He says, as the father has loved me, so also I love you. Of all the things that we would ever want in life, it would seem that this would be it.

But this thing about joy is rather quizzical. I think of this commercial for a luxury automobile. The rich guy is driving down the road thinking about what he really wants in life. Joy and success and peace and love are okay for some people but what I want is titillating power and control. I want to be in charge. If only he would know, who is charging him. Basically, whether rich or poor, our deepest desires can be summed up in the desire to be complete. To lack nothing

Some think that the church has gone soft with all this talk about love and joy and happiness. Instead, we should nail them to the wall and impress upon them, impress upon you, how guilty you are and how much you need to be told what to do.

It is unfortunate that many people reduce religion to burdensome rules and moral obligations. All the while the gospel is crying out to us how much God loves us and how He wants His joy to be our joy.

In the gospel today Jesus makes the point that it is not we who choose God. God is the initiator. God chooses us. The gospel says it was not you who chose me, but I chose you... The expectation then, is that we bear much fruit. In other words, that we behave ourselves, do what is right, and be charitable to one another.

This expectation however is secondary to the fact that God chooses you. When we truly realize that God is the prime mover in our life, it changes everything. A couple months ago Pope Francis published his latest apostolic exhortation. It has the title, *Gaudete et Exultate* (Rejoice and be Glad. It goes for 177 paragraphs with a very articulate and poetic reflection on mankind's quest for happiness and joy.

In the section titled:

***MORE ALIVE, MORE HUMAN***

32. Do not be afraid of holiness. It will take away none of your energy, vitality or joy. On the contrary, you will become what the Father had in mind when he created you, and you will be faithful to your deepest self. To depend on God sets us free from every form of enslavement and leads us to recognize our great dignity.

Do not be afraid to set your sights higher, to allow yourself to be loved and liberated by God. Do not be afraid to let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit. Holiness does not make you less human, since it is an encounter between your weakness and the power of God's grace.