

Deacon's Homily - 5th Sunday of Easter – Cycle C Catholic Charities
Sample written by Deacon Bob Arvidson for 5/14/2017

Today we especially pray for the mothers among us. We have mothers here in church with us and we thank you for the love and care you give. Some of us won't see our mothers today because they are at a distance. We keep those mothers in our prayers. And some have mothers who have died and gone before us. We pray for those mothers also and ask that they look down on us and know of our love.

Did you notice the first reading was about some dissension in the early Christian community? Some in the community felt that their widows were being neglected and the apostles recognized that this should be addressed. They consulted with the community and decided that seven should be given this task. Then the apostles commissioned these seven. It was important that the Christian community not be divided by this issue so they found a solution and reconciled. Note that at the end of this reading we hear that the word of God spread and the number of disciples greatly increased. So the Christian message continued to be shared with everyone who would hear.

Our gospel today begins with a similar message when Jesus says "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places". Jesus prepares places for many in heaven and welcomes people of all types into his Father's house. This part of John's gospel happens during the Last Supper, shortly after Jesus washes the feet of his disciples and tells them to go out and do the same. Then He states "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

In addition to being Mother's Day and the 5th Sunday of Easter, today is also the annual collection to support Catholic Charities. There will be a second collection today. This can be one of the ways we show our love for one another.

Catholic Charities is the social action arm of the church of Chicago. There are over a million people served each year in Cook and Lake Counties, in 153 programs. There are many people in our Chicago archdiocese who need help to get by and Catholic Charities serves many of those needs. There are likely people in church with us today who have been helped by Catholic Charities. You probably have co-workers, fellow students and neighbors that Catholic Charities has helped.

There's the young woman who is expecting a child and worried about how she will support her family on the minimum wage she gets from her work. The Pregnancy and Motherhood services of Charities helps her make plans to get care for her child when she returns to work. They help her by providing clothing for the baby and diapers, which turn out to be a major expense for a new mother. Because of their help, she is able to have her baby and support her new family.

There is the family that has come to this area from their home country where it is dangerous to even go out on the streets. The Refugee and Immigration services of Charities helps them find a place to live. It connects them to others who speak their language while they improve their

English and connects the family with a parish who takes this family under its wing as they learn about our country. Without programs they would have to stay in danger and always wonder if the family member who just went to the market will return safely home.

There is the elder man who lives alone now that his wife has died. He wants to stay in his home as long as possible. Meals on Wheels provides him with both meals and a wellness check daily. He is a good example of providing a service that keeps him from needing a more expensive elder care program.

Every year, Catholic Charities holds a graduation to celebrate the women who have finished the Family Self Sufficiency Program. In this program, women learn how to budget their money, develop new job skills and apply for jobs. When they graduate they have shown that they have the skills to move from needing support from Catholic Charities to being able to manage their family on their own. It's quite a celebration

We read about tragic situations in our news every day. What the news doesn't cover is the actions of the social workers, counselors, home care workers, drivers and volunteers who every day do caring acts for an elder, a child, a mother, a family through Catholic Charities.

In April, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago celebrated its 100th anniversary. This whole year will they will be highlighting programs and celebrating the service provided to those in need.

In spite of budget problems in the State of Illinois, Catholic Charities has been able to stay open because they use many sources of funding besides the state government. Today's collection and other fundraising events are crucial to continuing to provide help to our neighbors.

Your help can put into action the call of Jesus to care for our poor sisters and brothers. Jesus gave many examples to his disciples of serving others. Today we can follow his example by the way we treat people who don't have what we have.

Our gospel story today concludes with Jesus telling us "Whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I going to the Father". We can continue to do good works as Jesus taught us.