

May 9, 2021 – [Sixth Sunday of Easter](#)

Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4

1 Jn 4:7-10

Jn 15:9-17

By Sr. Olivia Montejano, MSBT

“How, Sister do we love others who call us names, hurt us or don’t want us around?” This question, posed by one of the youth attending a recent parish Confirmation retreat in a small Alabama town, was difficult and painful to hear. I do not even recall how a discussion we were having led us to a deeper conversation around racism and the experiences of these young people. I suppose it began as many deeper, fruitful conversations often begin when we let go of schedules and our plans and allow room for the Holy Spirit to fully enter into the moment. All of the retreat participants were Latinos, some born in the U.S. and others in Mexico and Guatemala and brought to the U.S. as infants or very young children. The majority have experienced discrimination, exclusion, name calling derision, and fear that possibly one day ICE could knock on the doors of their homes and take their parents or other loved ones away.

As a Latina I could relate to much of what the youth shared. Most recently, while driving home at night, after attending an event at the local high school, I was pulled over by the police. I sensed the policeman was trying to intimidate me as he approached my car, not speaking or asking for any information, but shining his flashlight inside the car and ever so slowly circling my vehicle twice. Finally, he approached the driver’s side window and spoke, “Where are you coming from?” he gruffly asked. I explained from the high school. He stared at me a long time and sternly asked again, “No! Where are you coming from?” I was puzzled but I noticed him looking at my colorful, embroidered blouse I had purchased while on mission in Mexico. It dawned on me what he was asking. “Sir, I am a citizen of the United States” I replied. (Actually, I’m third generation Mexican American.) He stared at me for a very long time, sneered and then harshly said, “You can go.”

In our second reading John encourages us to love one another, because love is of God. In today’s Gospel Jesus commands us to love one another. Jesus is not asking us to love when it’s convenient, when we feel like it, or love only those who love us. He is stating quite clearly that this is what is required of all of his followers at all times. We must never lose sight of the truth that following Jesus calls us to follow in his footsteps in everything he does.

Love is hard, really hard. Jesus knew how difficult love can be. From his mother insisting on him moving into ministry, to the death of his dear friend, Lazarus, to Judas’ betrayal, to Peter’s denial, to his agonizing crucifixion. In this sixth week of Easter we remember. We remember how truly

hard love is and what it constantly asks of us: to work for justice, the poor, the abandoned and those on the margins, to decide to make a difference where we are and through what we can influence.

Yes, true love can be costly, but it is only against the backdrop of the world's indifference, suspicion and hate that the radical nature of God's love is revealed in its fullest glory. True love imagines the future. True love knows and demands change. True love believes in possibilities. The first reading from Acts proclaims the Holy Spirit was poured out on those listening to the word.

May we, filled and inspired with God's mighty Spirit, testify and bear fruit, to love as Jesus loves.

Sr. Olivia Montejano is a Missionary Servant of the Most Blessed Trinity. During her 25 years as an MSBT, Sr. Olivia served in Pensacola, FL, Temascalapa Mexico, New Hartford CT, Philadelphia PA, Mexico City Mexico, Ft. Mitchell and Opelika, AL. Her missions included teaching, child mentor/advocate, Trinita Team Member, Vocation/Formation, Hispanic support staff and pastoral associate. Sister Olivia is currently missioned in Opelika, AL and serves as a Pastoral Associate at St. Mary's Parish and Hispanic support staff at Blessed Trinity Shrine Retreat.