

[Spirituality](#)

[Pencil Preaching](#)



by Pat Marrin

[View Author Profile](#)

patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.

[**Join the Conversation**](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

May 8, 2021

[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)



"I have chosen you" (John 15:17).

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48; Ps 98; 1 John 4:7-10; John 15:9-17

Among the universally shared experiences of childhood is being chosen, or not. It can be the unexpressed sense of security in a family, or the explicit message conveyed to an adopted child: "We chose you." A lifetime of doubt may follow a child into adulthood if this basic issue is not resolved. Choosing sides for neighborhood games was a big deal if you got picked or a disaster if not. What friendship or love story is complete without the agony of wondering if someone really wants you and the joy on someone's face when you choose them over all others?

The Good News resolves this question in a profound and definitive way. God chose each of us to be part of the mystery of Creation. To *be* is to be loved, deliberately initiated and held in existence, given a unique place and purpose within the journey of the universe in time toward its divine destiny. It was the joy of Israel to know itself as the Chosen People. It was the expansive and explosive message of the first Christian missionaries to share that blessing universally. It was delivered in a paradoxical way by two disciples who had every reason to believe they would be rejected for their failures. Peter and Paul were chosen to deliver God's unconditional love for sinners by first experiencing it themselves.

St. Teresa of Calcutta understood that the greatest suffering was to be abandoned and unwanted. Her order of sisters was founded to choose to love those dying on the streets and to affirm them as God's children as they passed from this world into the truth of God's preferential love for the poor. Called Mother by her sisters and by the poor, Teresa's other gift to the church was to exemplify the maternity of God. On this holiday celebrating mothers, we are reminded that God's love comes unconditionally and so has been compared to the most powerful and natural of bonds.

Isaiah 49:15 asks, "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands." Paternal love can be as unconditional but has often been associated with merit. In both today's second reading and Gospel attributed to John, we are freed from this assumption: "In

this is love: not that we have loved God, but that God loved us” (1 John 4:10). Jesus tells his disciples, “It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you” (John 15:17). We cannot earn or merit this love. It is pure gift. All we can do is respond to it by sharing it with one another.

Advertisement