



The Labor of Loving  
29<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, A  
October 21/22, 2017 – 5:00 p.m., 8:00, 12 Noon – Anointing  
of the Sick  
Church of the Holy Angels

1. In the movie, “Mass Appeal,” a young man has a deep desire to become a priest
  - his pastor, played by Jack Lemmon, wants to encourage him but the young man is headstrong, passionate about the message, and sometimes, inappropriate
  - one day he gets up to preach and gives a hell, fire and brimstone message – criticizing the community and leaving the pastor dumbfounded and embarrassed
  - in a beautiful, but tough, conversation between the pastor, Fr. Tim Farley, and his seminarian, Mark Dolson, Fr. Farley asks, “Do you love the people?”
  - Mark answers, “I love them for what they could be.” and Fr. Farley responds, “why don’t you try loving them for who they are?”
  - and that singular message has always stuck with me
  
2. In today’s second reading, St. Paul says to the church of Thessalonica, “We give thanks to God always for you, remembering you in our prayers, unceasingly, calling to mind your work of faith and labor of love and endurance in hope of our Lord Jesus Christ knowing how you were chosen.”
  - the Gospel was not just about words, it was spoken in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with much conviction
  - and look how he connects these words – faith=work, endurance=hope, love=labor
  - he calls to mind their work of faith, their labor of love and their endurance in hope
  
3. So often we think that love, and faith and hope should be easy
  - we think of these as ends but not means
  - I should have faith, have hope, have love
  - but St. Paul gives us the means: through work, endurance and labor
  
3. Paul knew that the people had been chosen, called by God, set apart for the work of faith and the labor of love
  - one translation says that “God has put his hand on you for something special”
  - another, “you have been marked out for God’s purpose”
  - wouldn’t it be great to know, for sure, how God wants us to love?
  - Scriptures are filled with examples of signs too obvious to ignore
  - Noah was instructed by God to build a boat before the flood
  - Abraham, left home and everything he had known to journey to the unknown land of Canaan
  - Sarah, despite her old age, was to bear a son

- God spoke to Moses through a burning bush to lead God's people out of bondage
  - Mary was visited by an angel and called to be the mother of Jesus
  - and Paul was knocked down, scales fell from his eyes and he knew, beyond a doubt, what God was calling him to
4. I don't know about you but if I'm going to give up my well-ordered, safe path and follow a new life I want bright lights, fireworks and knock-me-off-my-horse clarity
  5. But that's not how God works
    - God's transmitter functions the same way throughout history but our receivers are not as sophisticated as they need to be
    - with noise, busyness, and distractions – the guidance of God can be misunderstood, or not heard at all
  6. Like Moses, I can relate to his struggle to say yes to God
    - I can relate to his feelings of insecurity and lack of worthiness, "who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring his people out of Egypt?"
    - Moses can't even speak well
    - they say he had a speech impediment
    - he has no skill or expertise in standing before Pharaoh to ask for something so important
    - he can't depend on himself, so he depends on God – 100%
    - as a Salvation Army sign once read, "Commit your way to the Lord and whatever you do your plan will succeed."
  8. God has put his hand on you for something special
    - it doesn't necessarily mean being a pastor or a priest
    - but it does mean being attentive to what God wants you to do in your life
    - it means learning how to "love the people" in the way you have been uniquely chosen to do
  9. For some – it may mean religious life or priesthood, or diaconate
    - for others, it may mean marriage, parenthood, grandparenthood
    - for a son or daughter, a grandson or granddaughter, it may mean spending time with your family, knowing you have been called to love them
    - even for those who are ill or informed, it may mean glorifying God through your sickness, being an example to others, praying for others when it's all you can do
  10. At the Retrouvaille Conference last weekend one of the speakers said that LOVE is a four letter word spelled, W O R K
    - and isn't it true? Love comes from labor, hope from endurance, faith from working at it
    - these key virtues are praiseworthy
    - for his hand is upon us for something special
    - something, by which our lives, will glorify God