



I Need to Serve!

Homily for the 5th Sunday Ordinary Time, A
February 4/5, 2017
Church of the Holy Angels

1. Hacksaw Ridge is a powerful new film about the World War II experiences of Desmond Dross, an American pacifist, combat medic who was a Seventh Day Adventist Christian
 - when Desmond's brother signed up to serve in the Army, he also knew he was called by God to serve
 - but he was a conscientious objector – he refused to carry a gun – refused to work on Saturdays because it was the Sabbath, how could he ever be of help or purposeful in the war effort, if he couldn't defend himself or others???
 - he kept saying, “I want to save lives, not take them” and no one could understand why Desmond wanted to serve in combat and not take a deferment
 - his commanding officers seek a court martial against him, fellow soldiers beat him to a pulp and he's even thrown into a psychiatric prison
 - but he perseveres in his beliefs, his court martial is overturned and he goes into the battle field with telling everyone and God, “I NEED TO SERVE”
 - in the battle of Hacksaw Ridge, sure defeat seems near
 - Desmond moves carefully from one injured soldier to another, caring for them, reassuring them or, in some cases, helping them to die
 - ultimately, injured and bloody, his fellow soldiers refuse to attack the ridge again without Desmond Doss
 - his confidence, his faith, his convictions, his beliefs became a stronghold in war, a shield against fear and an encouragement that they're in this together
 - in the final battle, he rescues 75 soldiers from sure death and becomes the first conscientious objector in the United States to receive the Medal of Honor
 - one least likely man, made a lasting difference, and became a light to the world
2. From time to time we may ask ourselves, how can one person make a difference?
 - the problems of the world are so great, and I'm just one individual, I'm nobody
 - but no one thought that Desmond Doss would last a day on the battle field – yet he became for his fellow soldiers, strength and courage, fearlessness and bravery through the power of prayer and the conviction that he needed to serve
 - one person, the least likely among them, carried an army and brought them to victory
3. In today's Gospel Jesus uses a powerful image for the difference we can make in our world
 - he says, “You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world!”
 - each of us possesses a power that can transform the world

4. Isaiah tells us the “how” of this change can occur
 - “share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless, clothe the naked when you see them, do not turn your back on your own” – THEN your light will break forth like the dawn
 - THEN your wound will be quickly healed
 - remove oppression, and false accusation and malicious speech from your midst
 - THEN light shall rise for you in the darkness and the gloom shall become like midday
5. St. Paul speaks of the “demonstration of Spirit and power, so that your strength rests not on human wisdom, but on the power of God.”
 - we look at our world today and we can become overwhelmed and stymied by so much negativity, strife, and worry
 - yet, at the same time, I don’t remember a time when people had so much energy, resolve, and are vocalizing their concerns for the poor, the refugee, the forgotten, and the overlooked
 - difficult times stir up the energies and the passion that helps us to be a better people, a nation under God who can become light for the world, salt for the earth
6. Our Catholic Charities campaign begins next weekend
 - hundreds of thousands of people in Northeast Ohio are helped, not because they’re Catholic, but because we’re Catholic
 - when folks get beaten down because of homelessness, or poverty, or oppression, or frailty, the Church is there to lift them up, to feed, and house and clothe them
 - when we do so, OUR wounds are healed, light shines forth and we make a difference
7. At Holy Angels, there are so many ways that we can contribute our time, talent and treasure to make God’s kingdom more visible and tangible and real for people
 - Over 800 children are cared for at St. Thomas Aquinas and Urban Community Schools in the inner city of Cleveland and our partnership is a tremendous gift
 - We feed the hungry at St. Patrick Hunger Center, the West Side Catholic Center, and Chagrin Falls Park
 - We assist those in need through our St. Michael Fund, our monthly We-Can collections, our giving trees at Christmas and in July and through the beautiful, generous, loving, and caring people who make themselves available to the needs, concerns, and cares of those in need
 - and I’ll bet if you asked any of them they would tell you that what they give is so little compared to what they receive
8. Desmond Dross answered God’s call to serve – there was no choice in “if” he was called, only in “how” he was called
 - he saved 75 lives through faith, conviction, and strength that came from above
 - Put yourselves at God’s service and you’ll be light and salt, peace and joy and hope for the world!