

Homily Ideas for the Sunday before Labor Day, 2008

The 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

From the reading from Jeremiah,

I say to myself, I will not mention him, I will speak in his name no more.
But then it becomes like fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones;
I grow weary holding it in, I cannot endure it.

From the reading from Romans,

I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship.

From the reading from Matthew:

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.

- ❖ I remember my youthful interpretation of Christ’s words from this morning’s Gospel, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” Then and for much of my adult life I thought this meant I must give up candy or ice cream or something I enjoyed, then find and take up something I didn’t like, and in doing this I would be following Jesus. I thought that was tough but doable.
- ❖ As I grow I came to realize how much more challenging are the words. It is not that I must deny myself things but that I must turn away from separation from God, from selfishness, from being self-centered. The cross I must take up is love for all mankind. Christ transformed the cross from an instrument of death to a symbol of God’s redemptive love for all humans. To take up the cross is participate in Jesus’ love for all; it is to follow him.
- ❖ In much the same way my understanding of this passage from Romans has changed, “...to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God....” Far from giving my body to be a physical sacrifice, I am told that the way I live my life is the sacrifice that God wants. The sacrifice is to give up my

separation, my selfishness, my self-centeredness. Bringing my life into unity with the love God has for us, for me, is the worship desired by God.

- ❖ Jeremiah speaks to the expression of this sacrifice of self, this unity with the love Jesus has for us. It is not able to be contained. It breaks out. We are not to limit the expression or effects of this sacrifice to “Church times.”
- ❖ Today, the day before Labor Day, offers an opportunity to review how we make our sacrifice of self, how we take up the burden of loving all, in our daily work life.
 - Do my exchanges with my co-workers show love? Respect? Community? Responsibility?
 - What about my exchanges with clients/customers; do they show love? Respect? Community? Responsibility?
 - What about the quality of your work? Jesus was probably at least a carpenter’s helper before his public life as a teacher. How well do you think he did his work? Are you doing your job well enough to be proud of it? To see it as a sacrifice that Jesus would welcome from you?
- ❖ What is the loving way to respond to our work and our work day colleagues?

Submitted by Louis Trenta