

Sermon: July 11, 2010  
“The gift of ordinary”

He's in his 20's ... just an “ordinary young man” ... could be your son, could be mine ...  
Most of us are “ordinary” ..... we have our journeys, our successes, our failures.  
Last night as we lit candles and shared names ..... I'm thinking about the uniqueness of all our  
journeys ... and how no ONE JOURNEY is any more important than another.

This is why we come to the altar ...  
it's why we pray ... because here ----- around the table of the Lord ----- there are NO BARRIERS.  
This young man I'm thinking about made a big mistake. We all make mistakes, we all make wrong turns.  
I know him ... and now he is serving a 20+ year sentence in prison.

This week I receive a letter from him. No pity party, no excuses ... he is doing what he has to do.  
He asks about my wife Jude ... he is praying for her.  
He asks about the church ... says how much the prayers of our church mean to him and give him strength.  
His grandma sends my sermons to him. How about that!@!!??  
In his letter he asks: “By the way Don ... do you write your sermons ahead of time ... or are they  
spur-of-the-moment????” I bet some of you wonder, too.

So, do you ever wonder “why” we are here???? ... what's the point? Does the church matter? ... does prayer  
matter? You put money into the love-bucket, or a check into your offering envelope????  
Well ----- there is a young man out there ... whom you don't know ... and your prayers and support are part  
of the glue holding him together.

RELIGION IS PRETTY BASIC. It's not all that complicated.  
In the gospel for this morning ... a man is hurting alongside the road.  
Who is that man? ----- you? .. a little girl who's being made fun of? ... someone in your family going through a  
tough time? ... a man or woman who can't find work? ... a kid next door, who get lost in a big school?  
a young man serving his time?  
YES ----- THIS GOSPEL LESSON can be about anyone of us.

It's ironic ----- the priest is too busy.  
The levite (who knows the law) ... he walks the other way.  
But the slug-Samaritan ... the one on the outside-looking-in ... HE GIVES IT ALL.  
Use my horse ... take my money ... I will take care of this stranger who is hurting!!

We have so much to learn from Jesus' simplicity.  
WE ARE EACH OTHER. Oh, we try to stand alone ... we try to do it all ... but we can't.  
We share each other's pain ... we share each other's victories.

Have you seen a lemonade stand lately?  
Anyway ---- we are on our way home ... and two of our neighbor kids have a lemonade stand.  
You can tell Q has been hanging-out here too much. He sees Jack and Laura ... and he declares to me:  
“Dad, I have to go help them and make sure THEY GIVE THE MONEY TO THE POOR!!”  
That's my boy!!

Speaking of lemonade stands.  
A story in the Sun-Times last week about two kids on the north side. They have a lemonade stand ... and they  
are giving it away ----- FREE LEMONADE!!  
This columnist from the paper stops by ... and lectures them about why they shouldn't be giving it away for  
nothing!!

*You can't give this away ... it's not yours to do so!  
Your parents gave you the supplies ... so, you have to charge something, so you can pay them back.  
That's what is wrong with our country.  
We take what isn't ours and spend it on those who don't deserve it!!*

Talk about taking the joy out of giving folks a bit of free refreshment!!

This may be part of our country's problem ... but ----- LECTURING KIDS ABOUT THE EVILS OF  
GIVING AWAY LEMONADE ... this doesn't help!@!!

If there is one thing my mom and dad taught me ... and I thought a lot about them last night, as we lit candles  
here at the church ...

**THERE IS NOTHING MORE FUN AND MEANINGFUL IN LIFE .... *than giving unto  
others, without condition.***

**You are never too rich,  
never too old,**

**to enjoy getting something unexpectedly free.**

*A stick of Black-jack gum ... a toy on Sunday morning ... a glass of lemonade  
on a hot Saturday afternoon.*

**THE JOY OF THE GIFT!!**

We have received the greatest of all gifts ----- a son, a carpenter, a sacrifice ...  
**A GOD WHO GIVES US EVERYTHING.**

Not too long before my dad died ... I got an envelope in the mail.

I opened it ----- 10 singles ... with a short note:

*Dear Donnie ... we are never too old to enjoy getting "cash" in the mail ..."  
Love ... Dad*

Believing in Jesus is a little like getting "cash in the mail" everyday.

My job and yours????? ----- enjoy the love, enjoy the gift ...  
***and give some back everyday!!***

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