

WHAT'S REALLY IMPORTANT!

By: Fr. O'Dell

When I was growing up, I can remember my grade school teachers telling us that anyone could grow up to be President of the United States. It was a belief that all of us were brought up with. The belief that everyone was created equal and that everyone had the equal opportunity to do great things.

Well, when I got to adulthood, I found out that this belief isn't always true. Take for example some facts about how you get to be President of the United States. For one thing, the cost is astronomical. Here are some figures that I found that almost stagger the imagination.

The cost of getting elected includes: Travel (planes, trains and cars) \$61 million. Staff (managers and paid field workers) \$65 million. Advertising (TV, radio, billboards and direct mail) \$435 million. Operations (office rent, computers, supplies, food) \$54 million. Fund Raising (phone calls, printing, postage) \$30 million. Polling (firms, focus groups, phone calls) \$28 million. Special Events (parties, conventions, receptions, etc.) \$34 million. Altogether, that amounts to \$707 million or 3/4 of a billion dollars. Given the fact that there are 312 million people in our country - it would take a contribution of \$2.27 from every man, woman and child just to fund the cost of getting elected.

That money says nothing about knowing the right people, having the right platform, having the right timing. All of those considerations are also important factors, along with the bucks, in getting the nod to occupy the White House. Maybe not everybody can grow up to be President of the United States after all.

It seems like anything "worthwhile" in our society is going to cost a boat load of dollars. Nothing is cheap. Everything comes with a price tag - even the door to the Oval Office. Like it or not, big money is a reality of life.

It occurs to me though, that our understanding as Christians is just the opposite. The things that are the most important in our faith - cost absolutely nothing. It certainly doesn't cost \$707 million to get close to Jesus. We can talk to Him - free of charge - anytime we want to (or need to). It doesn't cost nearly a billion dollars to receive God's infinite supply of grace in our lives. It's there, free and clear for the asking, if we just open our hearts to receive it. It doesn't take a lot of money to be with family - to enjoy one's spouse - to reach out and build up one's children. All of those things come at no cost - if we are just willing to keep our priorities straight. There is no price tag on being honorable, honest or generous. These are all qualities that come through faith.

Truth is, the really important things in our lives don't take a lot of money. They may take a lot of willingness, a lot of focus, a lot of dedication - but they don't cost us one blessed dollar. Any one of us can grow to be filled with the grace and peace of Jesus Christ if we just open our hearts and lives to it. This August, let us rededicate ourselves to doing the things that are truly the most important things in our lives. Things that have to do with our relationship with God, our relationship with our faith, our relationship with our families and our relationship with our neighbor. Things that cost us nothing more than commitment, hard work and good will.