

Fr. John Sassani
Homily Given on November 5, 2006
Thirty-first Sunday of Ordinary Time
Liturgical Year B

Though all of you know what a seminary is, only some of you may have wondered what life in a seminary is like. For those who have wondered, the name tells you something. It comes from the Latin *seminarium*, which means a nursery for plants, a hot house where seeds can grow into hearty plants. Often that is what life in the seminary is like – a little, relatively closed environment where things can become bigger than life.

I saw one of our seminarians recently. He was talking about his studies and some arguments he and his fellow seminarians were having about theology. Then one of the seminarians – one of the wiser ones, I would say – cut to the quick of the arguments. ‘Guys, it’s about love. It’s all about love.’ I suspect Jesus approved of the contribution this young man made in the heat of the argument.

Today’s Gospel is quite familiar, one of the few that comes up every year – and that indicates its importance. Love is the heart of this passage. One way to see love is as the promotion of the good in another’s life. When we talk about love of God, that definition doesn’t work. God doesn’t need our efforts for the divine well-being. Love is a personal attachment to God. I love God. God is part of my daily life. I thank Him for all He gives me, ask Him for all I need. The Gospel is eloquent about loving God “with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength.”

Of equal importance is love of neighbor, loving your neighbor as much as you love yourself: to give your time to your neighbor, to cut as much slack for your neighbor as you do for yourself, to labor for the well-being of your neighbor as much as you do for your own well-being.

Luke’s version of this exchange between Jesus and the scribe is the occasion for the parable of the Good Samaritan. We are called to active, selfless love for others, not only for the neighbors we know and who are like us but also for neighbors who are quite different. We are called to act as Jesus did, as the good Samaritan did. The upshot of the parable is that everyone is my neighbor, especially those who are most needy. I must love the most needy

One way we do that is through direct service. The Church and individual Christians are good at that. I see it happening here among our parishioners all the time. Voting is another way to care for others. For Christians – Catholics – voting is not only our civic duty but also a concrete way we express love for our neighbor, especially our needy neighbor next door . . . in the state . . . in our country . . . in the global community.

God’s love is constantly at work on behalf of people and our needs. Christ’s love is constantly at work on behalf of people and our needs. St. Theresa says, Christ has no body on earth but ours, no hands but our hands. Yours are the eyes through which He looks with compassion on the world . . . yours are the feet with which He walks to do good . . . yours are the hands with which He blesses the world.

Christ is among us, that His word might stir our hearts to the love of God and neighbor, strengthen our desire to serve God and neighbor. He comes to us today in the Eucharist to embody His selfless love of others in us, so that we might love as He loved, more and more.