

August 29, 2010 – Greg Love

I have only been a member of St. Francis since October of last year, but in a short period, I have become very comfortable here and have come to know and appreciate quite a few very special people. As many of you know, I followed Lou here from Grace. Jackson and I actually came to visit when she first announced it to see what it was like here. Actually, it was a perfect fit.

Once before in my life I became close to a Rector, and when he announced he was leaving I considered following him. That was when I found out God had a sense of humor. Being a good Michigan fan, I could hardly find myself following him to Columbus Ohio, to the campus of Ohio State University.

This morning I would like to take a few minutes to talk to you about something that is very close to my heart... commitment. We all make commitments in our lives. When we are married, we make a commitment to love, honor and cherish our spouse. When we partake in a career, we make a commitment to our employer. When we have children, we make a commitment to our kids, to take care of them, raise them teaching them right from wrong, and love them unconditionally for the rest of our lives.

But what about our commitment to God? Our commitment to this church?

Sure, we come on Sundays and worship together, and put money in the offertory and that makes us a Christian, right? So we can spend an hour a week here in church and make a contribution and the other 167 hours a week, we are covered, we got our card punched, we are good to go. But what about the examples of our actions, of how we spend our time, of how we live like God would want us to live?

Like when we are driving into the Walmart and jump past someone for a parking space up front. Well, first of all God probably did not have a Walmart to pull his donkey up to. But if he did, he probably would have parked far away and been thrilled he had the ability to walk and was not crippled.

What about when we know of someone who is in hard times, between jobs, or had a medical issue in the family? We feel good to put a couple dollars in the envelope at work where they are taking up money to try to help them and then walk away smiling because we feel like we did a good deed. But what about the actual issue? Maybe they have a hard time picking up the kids from school, or going to the grocery store and could use someone to step up and say “what can I really do, to help you in this time of need?”

It seems in this fast paced life we lead today, with everything done in a hurry, many kids think McDonalds drive-thru is a family dinner. I have seen funeral homes and churches with drive-thru services. Yet how much time do we take to actually reflect: what am I really doing on this earth and what has God planned for me to do?

Each and every one of us has a God given talent. We often refer to it as “Gifts and Talents” and the question I have is, are we actually utilizing them and helping others?

Recently I had the privilege to go with a group to do mission work in New Orleans. I learned a lot. I learned that Stacy may very well be the next project manager on the apprentice. I learned that teenage boys can do anything they put their minds to. I learned our dear rector is everything we thought she was, and more. And, I learned that our problems at home are minute compared to a woman who 5 years after Hurricane Katrina still has no power or water in her house. Or, what about closer to home? What about the marine who lives down the street and is off in Afghanistan because he made a commitment to serve his country? His wife is home with three small children and working a part time job. Have you ever thought to stop and ask her if you could play ball with the kids out in the yard? Or watch the kids so she could go to the store for an hour in peace? What would it really take from you? A couple hours of your time, maybe once a week? However, what impact would it have on that family?

How about the elderly person who used to live next door and had to move to the senior center? He has three children but two live out of town. The one who lives in town works full time and has young children of their own. Sometimes they go by and visit their parent for an hour on Sunday after church. However, the rest of the time that person is sitting in that senior center being very lonely. Their quality of life is going down and has no one to really spend time with. What if you made a commitment to go by and visit once a week? What impact do you think it would have on that person?

You see often times if it is not something that is convenient or fun, we do not think another thing about it. However, what if God had thought that about us? Have you ever called for God and he did not answer your prayer? I doubt it. He may not have answered as quickly as we liked or given us the answer we wanted, but I promise you... he answered.

Personally, I have a soft spot in my heart for children. I always try to dedicate myself and my time to helping children. Maybe they cannot help themselves or maybe their parents do not know what to do to help them. Usually I don't either. However, just to see a smile for something that is unexpected will make you melt like a pad of butter.

When my oldest daughter was turning four, she was diagnosed with leukemia. In addition, my wife and I thought we were going to lose her. When the Doctor told us she had a 60% chance of full recovery, we were thrilled. We felt like God gave her back to us. Now she is 27 and has been off treatment for 20 years. And yes, God did give her back to us.

One of the most moving experiences I have had the pleasure to be a part of was the adoption of my son, Jackson, from Russia when he was 7 months old. What an amazing process and to witness the total difference in cultures and priorities. What beautiful people we met on our adventure. He has been nothing but a blessing to us all. Sure he is a little shy, but I am trying to work him out of it.

Recently I had the privilege to attend a funeral of a man I never met. His wife is a customer and friend of mine. As I sat there in the church with about 400 people I listened to his brother, his best friends of 30 years, and the soccer coach who helped him coach the 9 year old girls, tell about what an amazing person he was. How devoted he was to his family and his religion. About how this 42-year-old man bravely fought a battle against cancer and on his dying bed told his friends to make sure everyone knows not to worry about him. He will be with his Lord in heaven. But to please make sure his wife and children were taken care of. This man did not fear death because he knew that he had lived his life how God had wanted him to. I hope that when my day comes, I will be as brave and as confident as Matt Brooks.

In closing, I would like to encourage each of you to take a few minutes and quietly think. What is it God wants me to do here on earth. Do I have the opportunity to take a little time and make a difference in someone's life or am I going to think about this awhile and then let it slip into some other corner of my life where I have put everything that I don't want to tackle now? What if you never get to it? Our days on earth are numbered when we're born....the countdown has begun! He knows the amount of hairs on your head so I wouldn't test him with "I don't feel like helping someone today".

I hope that God helps each of us to understand what his plan is for us here on earth!

