

## SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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The Rev. J.D. McQueen, II - All Saints' Episcopal Church, San Diego, CA

“Henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus”

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We can find a great example of what Paul means when he says this in Lt. Vincent Capodanno, a Catholic Navy chaplain who was KIA while serving in Vietnam, and whose story is also appropriate to remember as we celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

If the name isn't familiar, here is the citation from when Fr. Capodanno was awarded the Medal of Honor.

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty as Chaplain of the 3d Battalion, in connection with operations against enemy forces.

In response to reports that the 2d Platoon of M Company was in danger of being overrun by a massed enemy assaulting force, Lt. Capodanno left the relative safety of the company command post and ran through an open area raked with fire, directly to the beleaguered platoon.

Disregarding the intense enemy small-arms, automatic-weapons, and mortar fire, he moved about the battlefield administering last rites to the dying and giving medical aid to the wounded. When an exploding mortar round inflicted painful multiple wounds to his arms and legs, and severed a portion of his right hand, he steadfastly refused all medical aid.

Instead, he directed the corpsmen to help their wounded comrades and, with calm vigor, continued to move about the battlefield as he provided encouragement by voice and example to the valiant marines. Upon encountering a wounded corpsman in the direct line of fire of an enemy machine gunner positioned approximately 15 yards away, Lt. Capodanno rushed a daring attempt to aid and assist the mortally wounded corpsman. At that instant, only inches from his goal, he was struck down by a burst of machine gun fire.

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By his heroic conduct on the battlefield, and his inspiring example, Lt. Capodanno upheld the finest traditions of the U.S. Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life in the cause of freedom.

Now could anyone call Fr. a traitor or a coward?

- ❖ In Awarding him the Medal of Honor, the United States of America says, emphatically, no.

Could he be called unfaithful or a hypocrite?

- ❖ The Catholic Church says, emphatically, no, having opened his cause for beatification and described him as having the “courage of a lion, and the faith of a martyr.”

In fact, his example is so incredible that it seems like a horrific injustice to even ask those questions.

And that’s exactly why Paul closes his letter to the Galatians by pointing to “bearing the marks of Jesus” – because there is no greater argument than the testimony of our lives.

You see, Paul wrote the letter to combat Judaizers who’d come into the community and were basically saying that all the Gentile converts had to become Jewish before they could become Christian.

- ❖ A big part of this comes down to how the Jews and pagans, who had vastly different moral standards, will live together as Christians.
- ❖ So Paul puts this in the context of the *law*; saying that Jesus doesn’t free them to *ignore* the law, but *fulfill* it by loving their *neighbors* as *themselves*, [and then gives several practical examples.]
- ❖ But *just* when the Galatians think, “OK, this is *basically* the 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment, *got it*,” Paul goes another step *further* – *really*, a *giant leap*.

He says, *Hey*, since you guys are so big on understanding all the *laws* and *sins* and all that, *here's* the one for *you*: 'Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the *law of Christ*.'

- ❖ Now, we see the "law of Christ" given at the Last Supper, where Jesus tells us to love one another *as he has loved us*, which takes us *way beyond* just loving our neighbors as *ourselves*.
- ❖ What makes this such a huge *leap*? Well, just think about how you love *yourself*.

I do *some* good things for myself, but there are *plenty* of others that I *don't*.

- ❖ I like eating *unhealthy* foods more than *healthy*; staying in *bed* more than getting up *early* to *exercise*, and so on.
- ❖ Why don't I *do* them if I *know* they're *good* for me? Because they don't *feel* good enough.
- ❖ Sadly my approach to loving my *neighbor* is *often* just about the *same* - *some* things I *do*, *some* I *don't*, depending on whether I *think* it will make me feel better to *do* it than *not* to do it.

But while we all experience the limits of how we love even ourselves, Jesus' love has no limits - it's unconditional and unchanging and always available to us.

- ❖ It's totally free from self-interest, so he can love those who don't want to be loved, even those who hate him.
- ❖ Bearing our burdens means that Jesus will even enter into the suffering of our sin; he will stay close to us even if we're tearing our lives apart.
- ❖ Paul says that when we live to the flesh, we bite and devour one another, and he warns not to be consumed – yet that is *exactly* what Jesus *commands* us to do at Holy *Communion*.
- ❖ Jesus' *love* for us and his desire for our *highest* possible good is *so* great that it *consumes* him, and it's a *joy* to him.

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The idea of someone loving us this way is so incredible that we wouldn't be able to believe it – except that Jesus has the marks to prove it.

- ❖ So when Paul points to them he's saying, "If I haven't convinced you with my words, look at my body; does it look like Jesus' body? Look at my life; does it look like Jesus' life?"
- ❖ There is no greater argument that the love of Jesus is real and that freedom through the gospel is possible than the testimony of our lives.
- ❖ So what *is* the testimony of our lives? *What* are the marks of love that *we* bear?

Really think about it and look hard, because these are the signs of love that transform people's lives when they see it.

- ❖ But don't be discouraged or afraid of them – that's not the point.
- ❖ Part of why the resurrected Jesus still bears the wounds is to reassure us, to prove to us, that they are not unto death, but life.
- ❖ That's what the marks of Jesus are in our lives – proof to the world around us that no matter what is happening in our lives, the love of Jesus is greater.

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