

Sunday Homily
29th Sunday Ordinary Time A
October 19, 2008

By Deacon Jeff Claar

Last week, my wife and I took a four-day getaway with some friends to Nashville. Over nine hours on the ride down we talked about many things, but first of course, we talked about the current economy.

Our friend is in the banking industry and he said that he spent the whole week before calming down employees and customers alike. Our 24 hour news cycle bombards us and saturates us with endless bad news. He was smart enough to notice that he himself was being affected too, so he decided to go home that evening and take a break from it all. My friend said he didn't read the paper and he didn't watch the news, but he did put in a movie and just enjoyed himself at home for the evening. And after doing this for a day or two, he noticed that he was feeling better.

When we arrived in Nashville, we did the usual tourist things. We had a great time and we were busy day and night. I didn't read the papers or watch the news for four days and I noticed that I felt better too.

Yes today's endless news of the economy, our negative political treadmill, and maybe even some personal financial difficulties can all pile on us and leave us with a sense of hopelessness. Jesus tells us today that we should give to Caesar what is Caesar's, so we should be aware of what is going on and do our duty as citizens, but we also should give to God what is God's. And it is Jesus who is the Good News today and every day.

Today, I would like to concentrate on the positive message of St. Paul as he writes to the people in Thessalonica (1:1-5b) because it applies so perfectly to us today.

First of all, let's recall that this is one of the earliest churches that St. Paul established. He writes this letter to them in about 51 AD, less than 20 years after Christ's ascension. They are a young church, living a radical message for their times. Their future was definitely uncertain. The stakes were high for our brothers and sisters in Thessalonica, but Paul praises them for their faith, their hope, and their love.

But an even closer look at what Paul says should encourage us today. He doesn't just praise the virtues they *have*, but the way that *they lived them out* in their daily lives. And it wasn't always easy.

Paul calls to mind their work of faith, their labor of love, and their endurance in hope. We understand the concepts of work, and labor, and endurance today don't we? This is the day-to-day; rubber-meets-the-road aspects of living out our faith in our families, at work and in society.

We share the same faith today that the people in Thessalonica had. Our belief in God and His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit is the same belief that gave the Thessalonians the strength to work and labor and endure in faith, hope and love in their daily lives.

Let us today, be encouraged by how they lived, just as St. Paul was. Let us keep heart that with our God all things are possible and He knows exactly what we need, and He will never let us down.