Homily – 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time A, 2017
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We are coming to the end of this liturgical cycle focused on Matthew’s Gospel. In Matthew’s Gospel account, Jesus has now entered Jerusalem. Tensions are growing between Jesus and the leaders of the Jewish people. Today he confronts the leaders with the story we just heard.

All the readings today might be summed up this way: It’s good if our words say YES to God. But what is crucial is that our lives say YES to God. Unless they do, our words are worthless.

Here’s a question that I suggest is worth pondering: Could my coming here at least sometimes be a form of saying “yes,” without actually doing all that messy stuff that getting involved requires?

Sometimes I ask myself if I’m not a better preacher of God’s word than someone who acts on that word.

There’s a quote from a crusty old doctor in Dostoevsky’s Brothers Karamazov, “I love humanity, but the more I love humanity in general, the less I love people in particular.”

I think of my dad . . . One day he said, “Sometimes I think the whole world has gone mad but your mother and me . . . and sometimes I wonder about her.”

I think it’s true. For most of us, God is not the big problem. The big problem is those pesky humans that God created, especially the creeps who really bother us. When some people get in close they bring trouble. and sooner or later they restrict your precious freedom.

Perhaps a reason people avoid raising a family these days
is because of the human cost involved in doing that. Perhaps people don’t join religious communities anymore because those communities want to move you just a little too far beyond your predetermined boundaries.

St. Paul gently, but firmly, eloquently challenges all of this: “Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be clung to but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.”

Here’s a quote I like: “Christ was not concerned about looking like what people thought God should look like.”

I was on retreat this past week. Retreat director, Siser Janice Bachman, and I talked about fruits of the retreat:

1. Song:
   - Open my eyes, Lord, help me to see your face.
   - Open my ears, Lord, help me to hear your voice
   - Open my heart, Lord, help me to love like you.

I saw/heard that in children dancing at a German restaurant where I had dinner with a friend Thursday evening. Then in a butterfly alight on a flower and I went for a walk.

2. Memory of people on whose shoulders I’ve been privileged to stand in my 76 of life:
   - Gandhi, Roosevelt, Bobby and John Kennedy,
   - Martin Luther King Jr.
Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day
Monica Hellwig, James Carroll, Dan Bergan
Eugene LaVerdiere, Karl Rahner
Ken Untener
Margaret Brennan, Marian Farrell, Anne Chester
My parents, grandparents.

“And being found in human form,
    he humbled himself
    and became obedient to the point of death—
    even death on a cross.”

“Christ was not concerned about looking like
    what people thought God should look like.”