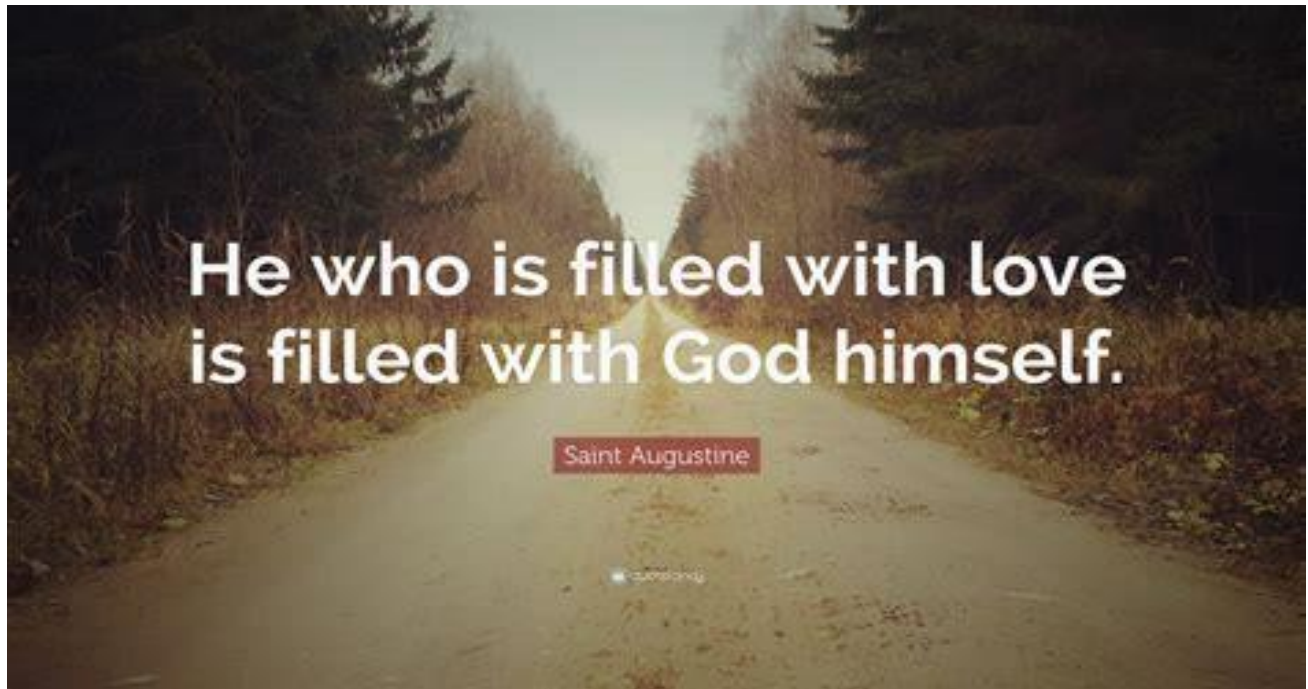


FROM FATHER JOHN: *“Extol the LORD, our God, and worship at his footstool; holy is he! Moses and Aaron were among his priests, and Samuel, among those who called upon his name; they called upon the LORD, and he answered them. From the pillar of cloud he spoke to them; they heard his decrees and the law he gave them. Extol the LORD, our God, and worship at his holy mountain; for holy is the LORD, our God.” ~ Psalm 99*

Holy is the Lord our God!!!



What is love? It is one of the most important questions that we can ask ourselves. We need to know what love is in order to have good, solid loving relationships that bring life and energy into our lives.

But unfortunately, our society and our culture, especially most of what comes out of Hollywood, point us in the wrong direction. Our culture points to things like feelings and fleeting pleasures when defining love rather than to what love truly is.

The following is an article from *Celebration* that was written by Melissa Musick Nussbaum. I chose to share this article with you because I know that we have a good number of parishioners who are caring for their elderly parents. Caring for

the elderly, especially our own parents, is a great act of love. It can bring great joy into our lives and our parents' lives but at the same time it can also bring a whole host of challenges and frustrations.

"My 89-year-old mother lives with us. She is in heart failure, and she has macular degeneration. She is nearly deaf. She takes drugs to thin her blood, to regulate her heartbeat, to purge fluid from her body, to elevate her mood, to lower her blood pressure, to jump-start her thyroid, to ease her pain and to help her sleep. She takes other pills to mitigate the side effects. She will not wear her hearing aids.

My mother is unsteady on her feet, and we have to hold on to her when she walks. Even so, she falls, and the falls are coming more frequently now.

She talks about bowel movements -- a lot. She talks about their frequency, consistency, color, painfulness (or not) and her desire for them to occur more frequently, as well as her desire for them to occur less frequently. At one Thanksgiving dinner, right in the midst of the festive carving and toasting, she took out her partial plate and showed us where she had recently lost a tooth.

And yet. And yet. I know what I want, what I wish, what I desire. I know what I pictured: Me sitting by her rocking chair while she revealed abiding truths and told wonderful stories. She would tell me how to face aging and death gracefully, with faith and even joy. I would listen and learn. We would drink tea and eat homemade cookies. We would not talk about what foods give her gas. That's the stuff of my fantasy. But our conversation more often goes like this.

We are at the dinner table. I ask my mother, "Do you want carrots?" She answers, "You won't come? Why not?" And then, a little puzzled, "Where are you going?" I turn the volume up. I hear myself screaming about carrots. This can't be good.

Or this. The phone rings at 7. It is my mother. She has not slept well. Her knee hurts, and she can't get the top off her bottle of Tylenol. "I hate those damn childproof tops," she tells me by way of greeting, even though I long ago stopped buying anything for her with a safety cap. I say I will get the top off the

damn Tylenol bottle. I do. Not a whisper of inspiration stirs me. This, and not my fantasy, is our life together.

It is not, I sometimes muse, Mitch Albom's Tuesdays With Morrie, the best-selling story of an elderly, dying college professor who spends his last Tuesdays on earth with a former student. You remember it, don't you? An old man, a young man and life's greatest lesson. Both teacher and student are richer for these days. So why do I feel that I am growing poorer -- in patience, in strength, in grace?

Then I remember: Albom spent Tuesdays with Morrie. And not even Tuesday nights. Just Tuesdays. During the day. Working hours. I can stand anyone for one day a week during business hours. I want to read 24-7 With Morrie. And the sequel: I Killed Morrie and No Jury in America Would Convict Me. I'm not too interested in Tuesdays. I want to read about the daily-ness of old age, the daily-ness of sickness, the daily-ness of death, the daily-ness of care. I don't want to read about visitors. I want to read about keepers. For, as any housekeeper knows, it is daily work. It is the same work, done better or worse, over and over again.

A housekeeper does the same tasks day after day. It is never enough to sweep, and be done with sweeping. Each day brings fresh dirt and debris. It is never enough to wash the dishes and be done with washing. A bed that is made will be slept in; clothes that are ironed will be wrinkled. Housekeeping is routine-keeping. It is routine done by hand. A housekeeper doesn't watch dusting. She dusts. A housekeeper doesn't observe stained clothes. She washes them.

*I don't have to like it, or feel elevated by the work. I just have to do it. And, task by task, I become a woman who brings order out of chaos. I become a woman who cleans what is dirty, who puts things right. And as it is with the work of housekeeping, so I hope it is with the work of love. Just as sweeping is an act, and not a thought, so **love is an act, and not a feeling**. My work is to open the Tylenol bottle, to speak up and speak slowly, to offer my arm, to help her in and out of the car, to listen. Just that, song in my heart or not. And, task by task, day by day, I become my mother's keeper."*

Melissa writes that ***“Love is an act, and not a feeling.”*** And, she is absolutely correct. Our Lord Jesus defines love this way, “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.” (John 15:13) And then, our Lord journey's to the cross where He lays down His life for each of us. This is how we are to love, this is how we are to act, this is how we are to live.

When Melissa acts as her mother's keeper, she lays down her life for her friend. When you act as your mother or your father's keeper, you lay down her life for your friend. ***This is what love is, caring so much for the good of another that we are willing to lay down our lives for our friend.***

May God Bless you and all those who love the Lord.

