

June 5, 2008
Thursday of the Ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Readings of the day may be found on the following link:
<http://www.nccbuscc.org/nab>

2 Timothy 2:8-15
Psalms 25:4-5ab, 8-9, 10 and 14
Mark 12:28-34

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Years ago, I found this gospel was a bit disconcerting. I thought that putting self-love above love of others was not the correct order of things. But, as I spent years listening to people struggle with what we culturally call 'low self-esteem', I came to see that the phrase 'we cannot give what we do not possess' fits love as well as money or particular skills. Only those who are comfortable in their own skin are able to withstand criticism, buck the status quo, or risk rejection. Authentic love requires us to stretch beyond our comfort zone. It also requires us to take the back seat as we minister and serve those in need. When we are not OK about our self, we are too busy soothing, protecting, or feeding our ego to give to others in ways that cost us or put us at risk. Yet, it is virtually impossible to love our selves with out first being loved. Love is both the seed and the fruit of all life. In one of his books on the saints, Robert Ellsberg says, "However love enters our lives, it calls us to our better selves." In the movie, *As Good As It Get*, Jack Nicholson's character says to Helen Hunt, "You make me want to be a better man." He is loved in a way that makes him want to be more. Love holds within itself the power to transform and redeem. Love begets love. John of the Cross tells us, "Where there is no love, put love, and you will draw love out." It is no wonder that many of the great men and women of our world dedicated their lives to the message of non-violence. As Jesus spent his life teaching us, the world can only be transformed and redeemed through love.

It is the present encounter of our ordinary life that provides us our own road to holiness.

~ Robert Ellsberg

Who has taught me a lesson about love today?
What have I learned?