

This morning's gospel contains the quote I chose for my holy card on the occasion of my ordination to the priesthood, namely: "It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain." I like this quote because it captures a hidden reality that is at the heart of our relationship with God, or more accurately put, His with us. You see, God has chosen and appointed each and every one of us to bear good fruit for the world, because He loves the world and all who are in it. While this call begins with our birth and is confirmed in our Baptism, few of us realize this call, this vocation, until much later in our lives.

I didn't realize my call to bear fruit until I went off to graduate school and got more involved in my parish community. And even then, it was more of a response to God's love than a realization of God's call and expectation to bear fruit in his name. I say this because I think that is the way it is with most of us. Most of us, whatever our story is, find ourselves responding to God's call before we even **realize** what it is we are doing. It is only **after** seeing the fruit we've born, that we come to see God's hand in it and his personal action in our lives. In seminary, we called this process "theological reflection." Theological reflection (whether you're a seminarian, priest, deacon, or lay person) allows us to see the presence of God in our lives, and that presence extended to others through our ministry, however great or small we might perceive it to be. In either case, we allow God to use us as his instrument to touch and affect the life of another, that would not have been possible otherwise.

This in itself is cause for further reflection. What this says is, that without us and our response to God's gentle nudge and invitation, **someone** would have missed-out on an experience of God's love for them. When we think of our Baptismal call in this light, to be Christ for others, there is a lot left hanging in the balance. I don't say this to make us neurotic Christians, but rather to highlight the love and **trust** our Creator has placed in us, to be the ambassadors of his presence and love in and for the world. What a wonderful honor this is.

Again I say this not to make us neurotic or scrupulous in the daily living of our lives, but rather to help us see that even the **smallest** gesture of benevolence we offer, has God written all over it. And **that** (my friends) can touch and change lives; it can produce fruit that will remain. Chances are, we will **never** know the totality or full impact of our benevolent gestures in response to God's perceived or unperceived promptings, this side of heaven. But rest assured, our actions carry weight, because God has given them weight, no matter who we are or where we're from, no matter how much or how little we think we have to give. **Any** fruit we bear (large or small) is and always will be, precious in God's eyes.