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COME SPIRIT!!

6th Easter B-2003 THEME: Love is a Choice

(With gratitude to Fr. William Bausch—60 Seasonal homilies and Storytelling the Word)

It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you to go forth and bear fruit.

It is quite flattering for us to realize that Jesus has chosen each of us. There are billions of people in the world, but we have been chosen to carry the message of the Kingdom. We have been chosen to bear fruit.

Quite flattering, indeed. Only the choice comes with a price. Deep down, it can even be an annoyance. If we have been chosen to work for the Kingdom, then our options are limited. If we have put on the baptismal gown, we cannot wear the clothes of pagans. This is hard to accept in a society that preaches endless choices, a society that caters to infantile fantasies of no rules and no limits to life.

Consider how we are brainwashed by advertisements into the concept that we have endless options in life. The motto of Isuzu is: "The world has boundaries, ignore them." Foster Grant tells us that buying their sunglasses will firmly place us among those who have *no limits*. The Outback Steakhouse uses the motto *No Rules Just Right*.

And then Jesus comes along and tells us to put on the uniform of discipleship. We come to the realization that because we have been chosen, we have to have rules for a way of life that will be called Christian. We have to deny our

infantile desires for the infinitely greater good of the Kingdom of God.

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An example might help. A young boy gets his first after school job working in his grandfather's little store. After a few months, his grandfather felt confident that the boy could be left to handle the store alone for brief periods of time. It was during one of these few hours when the boy was alone that the store was robbed. The grandson was shot to death. A few days later the robbers were captured. It was the same day as the boy's funeral. A news reporter interviewed the grandfather and asked him if he wanted the robbers to receive capital punishment. The grandfather looked shocked at the question. "I cannot wish that," he said. "I am a Christian, I am not permitted revenge." Christianity imposes limits.

You are aware that Mother Theresa was often asked why she spent so much time and energy helping people who were going to die anyway, and most of them not even Christian. Her answer was that she had no choice. She was a Christian, committed to serving Jesus, and Christ identified with the poorest of the poor.

You may not have heard the story of Princess Alice, the second daughter of Queen Victoria of England. The princess married and had a child, a baby boy. When the child was four he came down with a terrible disease at the time called black diphtheria. It was highly contagious. There was no cure and no hope. The doctors and nurses told the princess that she had to stay away from her son. Her own health was frail. One day as she stood at the door of her little boy's room, she heard him whispering to a nurse, "Why doesn't my Mommy hold me and kiss me anymore?" That was more than Princess Alice

could bear. She then did what any loving mother would do. She ran to her son's bed, hugged him and kissed him. She had no choice. She had to show her love. He needed her. Within

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weeks she came down with the sickness. Both were buried together.

The choice of love demands that we accept limitations on our lives and even pain and suffering in order to love as Jesus loved. You parents respond to your baby's cries in the middle of the night. You have no choice if you really love your child in the true meaning of love. A teenager listens to a friend's story of family difficulties. The other teen needs an ear that understands. The first teen would much rather be listening to music, but has no choice but to be present for the suffering friend. Christianity demands it. A retiree spends a few hours each day with an elderly neighbor. He'd rather be fishing, but he has no choice but to visit Christ's presence in the homebound. An auto mechanic repairs a traveling family's car after the garage's hours so the poor folks can get on the road and get their kids to bed. He would rather be with his own family, but he is a Christian, he has no choice. And on and on. Millions of little routine daily sacrifices make the greatest life there ever was a reality in our world.

Love, the true love of Jesus, imposes limits on us. Love is sacrificial. When we look at the cross, we realize the life that we have been chosen to lead. We have been chosen to lead Jesus' life a reality. And he died for others.

There is a great little story about a scheme the devil had to sneak into heaven. The legend goes that just before dawn

on Easter Sunday, the devil dressed up as the Risen Lord. He had his fallen angels accompany him, all dressed as angels of light. As he approached the gates of heaven he and his mob cried out the words of Psalm 24, "Lift up your heads, O gates of Heaven. Rise up you ancient portals, that the King of Glory might enter."

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The real angels looked down at whom they thought was their King returning in triumph from the dead. So they shouted back in joy the next words of that psalm, "Who is the King of Glory?" The devil then made a fatal mistake. He opened his arms, spread his palms and declared, "I am the King of Glory." He did himself in. The angels immediately slammed shut the gates of heaven. They saw right away that there were no marks of the nails in his palms. He had no wounds of love. He was obviously an imposter.

To put it very simply. If we have been chosen by Christ, and we have, then we have to accept his way of life, the way of limits, the way of sacrificial love.