

Happy Mother's Day to all people who are mothers and those who serve as mothers!

As a child, I had a good friend, let's call her Mary. Mary was very small and skinny as a stick. Her grandmother used to call her a "little string bean". As we all know, not all childhood experiences connote happiness or even good feelings. I hope what happened to Mary never happened to you, but unfortunately, I am pretty sure that more than a few of us had similar experiences. This negative experience most frequently happened at school but it may have occurred in other places such as church school, scouts, or just hanging out with other kids.

What I am talking about is the dreaded "picking or choosing sides." The ones doing the "picking or choosing" were usually boys or girls that had vibrant, outgoing personalities, they seemingly were above average in cuteness, and usually the most popular kids in the group.

Because of her petite size, timidity, and quietness, it seemed Mary was almost always the last person chosen, particularly if the choosing related to a sport activity. Even now, I can easily relive the Mary's embarrassment, apprehension, anxiety, and humiliation of being that last person picked or chosen. I know just how Mary felt because I was usually the one picked just before Mary.

We all long to be chosen and I suspect that feeling, that desire never goes away. Even as adults, we want to be the one chosen for that new job, a long sought promotion, to be a part of the in-crowd, or to have our love returned by someone we have fallen in love with.

In real life, however, I'm sure that we all understand that not everyone gets chosen that in hindsight should have been the one selected. For example, Michael Jordan was cut from his high school basketball team when he was a sophomore, and Margaret Mitchell's novel, *Gone with the Wind* was rejected by more than 35 publishers before it was finally picked up for publication. Who would have ever guessed? I think we have all had the experience of not being chosen and are keenly aware of the resulting disappointment and pain that being left out causes.

Today's Gospel from John gives us a different way of thinking about being chosen. Jesus, in speaking with his disciples shortly before his death, says to them, "You did not choose me but I chose you". When you think about it, Jesus did not choose the most handsome, the smartest, richest, or even the remotely successful or influential people to be his disciples. No, Jesus' choice of ordinary commercial fishermen, a loathed tax collector, a political extremist, and even a future traitor was the best he came up with. Not a likely group of winners there from all appearances.

The men chosen by Jesus had no idea or clue what they were in for, much less the impact they would have upon the world. We too are like the disciples and what was true for them is also true for us.

Paul writes in his First Letter to the Corinthians:

*“Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God” (1:26-29).*

John and Paul are both telling us that we don't have to worry one iota about being the last one picked because Jesus has already chosen us for his team. Despite our flaws, our sinfulness, our arrogance, our pridefulness, Jesus still chose us. Jesus chooses each and every one of us.

Ultimately, it is NOT up to us, the individual whether we choose Jesus, whether we chose to abide with him by obeying his commandments, or whether we chose to help build God's Kingdom on earth. God does not leave it up to us because time and time again, our record, our actions, our lives indicate we make the choice to live selfishly rather than be a disciple of Christ.

God's choosing us is not a cure-all for all of life's difficulties or problems. It is in knowing and believing that God has chosen us, loves us, and will use us that gives us the courage to face the challenges of life while strengthening us to meet these obstacles.

The Good news of the Gospel is that while our choices do indeed matter and ultimately have consequences, our choices do not govern, limit, or define our lives. Why? Because Jesus chose you! Jesus at his death on the cross atoned for all the wrong choices you have ever made.

Jesus died for you because he chose you. At the end of your life, you will find that the sum of your life is not the choices you made, but rather the choice Jesus made – the choice Jesus made to choose you, to call you his beloved friend, and give you eternal life.

Thanks be to God! Amen.