

***"This I command you: love one another!"***

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

**Once upon a time**, there was a baby boy...born in a Milwaukee hospital. He was blind, mentally retarded, and had cerebral palsy. To be honest, the poor thing was little more than a vegetable that didn't respond to sound or touch. Finally, to this woeful story...his own parents abandoned him.

The hospital didn't know what to do. Then someone remembered May Lempke, a 52-year-old nurse, who lived nearby. She had raised five children of her own. May would know how to care for such a baby. They asked May to take the infant, saying:

***"He'll probably die young."***

May responded:

***"If I take the baby, he won't die young; and ...I'll be happy to take him."***

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May called the baby Leslie. It was not easy to care for him. Everyday, she massaged the baby's entire body. She prayed over him; she cried over him; she placed his hands in her tears.

One day, someone said to her:

***"Why don't you put that child in an institution? You're wasting your life."***

As Leslie grew, so did May's problems. She had to keep him tied in a chair, lest he fall over.

The years passed: 1, 2, 5, 10, 15. When Leslie was 16, May was finally able to teach him to stand-alone. All this time, he didn't respond to her. But, all this time, May continued to love him & to pray over him. She told him stories of Jesus, even though he didn't seem to hear her.

Then, one day, May noticed Leslie's finger plucking a taut string on a package. She wondered what this meant. Was it possible that Leslie was sensitive to music?

May began to surround Leslie with music. She played every type of music imaginable, hoping that one type might appeal to him.

Eventually, May & her husband bought an old, 2<sup>nd</sup>-hand piano. They put it in Leslie's bedroom. May took Leslie's fingers in her own & showed him how to push the keys down, but he didn't seem to understand.

Then, one, cold, winter night in 1971, May woke to the sound of someone playing Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No.1. She shook her husband, woke him up, & asked if he'd left the radio on. He said he didn't think so, but they decided to check.

As you may already suspect, what they discovered ...was beyond their wildest dream. Leslie was sitting at the piano. He was smiling & playing the concerto, perfectly, by ear!

*It was too remarkable to be true!*

*Leslie had never gotten out of bed alone before.*

*He'd never seated himself at the piano before.*

*He'd never struck a piano key alone before.*

*Now, there he was, playing...magnificently!*

*May dropped to her knees and said:*

***"Thank you, Jesus. You didn't forget Leslie."***

Soon, Leslie began to live at the piano. He played classical, country/western, ragtime, gospel ...even rock. It was absolutely incredible. All the music May had played for him was, somehow, stored in his brain & was now flowing out thru his hands, like a flood, into the piano.

Leslie, who was now 28, began to talk. He didn't carry on extended conversations; but he did ask questions, gave simple answers, & made brief comments. For example, with May & her husband,

one night, he was watching a comedy on T.V. He was fed up with the silly dialogue & said:

**"We'd better turn that off. They're all crazy!"**

Leslie now plays concerts for church groups, civic organizations, cerebral palsy victims & their parents, and retarded children & their parents. He's even appeared on national T.V.

Dr.'s describe Leslie as an **autistic savant**, a person who is mentally challenged from brain damage, **BUT**, extremely talented. They can't explain the phenomenon, although they've known about it for nearly 200 years. Recent DNA insights have given real hope for progress in this area. May Lemke can't explain it either. **BUT**, & there's that proverbial **BUT** again, she **does** know how that talent can be released—through love.

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The story of May Lempke & her untiring love for Leslie is especially appropriate for us today for 3 reasons. **What, exactly, are those 3 reasons you ask?**

**Well, I am glad you asked that question!**

**1<sup>st</sup>**, it dramatizes, in a moving way, the **message** in today's readings, i.e., Jesus' teaching about **love for one another**, which I just read to you from the Gospel of St. John.

**2<sup>nd</sup>**, it dramatizes, in a moving way, **why we celebrate Mother's Day**. It's because, mothers, as a rule, **live out** Jesus' teaching about **love** more consistently and more faithfully than does any other assemblage of human beings.

**3<sup>rd</sup>**, it dramatizes, in a moving way, the tremendous **power of love**. What May's love did for Leslie, I'm sure you'll agree... is nothing short of miraculous.

And that's precisely what Jesus intended love to be. Through love, God has put at our disposal the greatest power there is in the world.

It's a power... **all the money in the world can't buy.**

It's a power... **all the knowledge in the world can't give.**

It's a power... **all the leaders in the world can't possess.**

It's a power... **all the armies in the world can't muster.**

And... **What's more**, love is a power that every human being has...

**No matter what gender,  
No matter what religion,  
No matter what nationality,  
No matter what educational achievement.**

**Love isn't reserved for the healthy.  
It isn't reserved for the wealthy.  
It isn't reserved for the wise.  
It isn't reserved for the famous.**

It, **love**, is for everyone. Love is the one thing that makes us equal before God & each other. This is the Good News contained in today's Scriptures, his Word. It's the news that can transform our world as beautifully as May Lempke's love transformed Leslie's world.

It is the Good News we should breathe in deeply and live out fully, to the hilt.

If we do, we too, will be able to work miracles through our love... in **our** lifetime, just as Jesus worked miracles through his love... in **his** lifetime.

**So, I pray...**

May our loving God, our Abba, bless you...  
the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen