

## **30th Sunday Ordinary Time**

**Fr. Jim's Homily**

**October 25, 2020**

A traveler comes to the gate of a kingdom. He is planning to settle there. He asked the gate keeper, "What are the people like here?" And the gate keeper asked, "Well what were the people like where you came from?" He responded, "Not very friendly. Everyone is out for themselves, greedy, mean and dishonest." The gate keeper responded, "You will find they are the same here." The next traveler came and asked the same question, "What are the people like here?" The gate keeper asked, "What were they like where you came from?" The traveler responds, "Generally caring, thoughtful, truthful, and generous." The gatekeeper responded, "You will find them the same here." It can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. If we expect people to be good and loving, we will be more likely to find them good and loving. If we expect people to be evil or bad, we are more likely to find them evil or bad.

In the Gospel reading, a scholar of the law asked Jesus which commandment in the law is the greatest. This would have been a very common scholarly discussion at that time. There were 613 laws, so it was a common discussion. Jesus answers: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This was very well known to the Jewish people at the time. They said these words every morning and again at nightfall. They wanted these words to be on their lips at the time of their death. It is Deuteronomy 6:5. Then he adds a second from Leviticus 19:18: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend upon these two commandments." These

laws were not new, but combining them as part of one law was. This is very familiar to us, but how do we live it out? It is a lifelong task.

Love of God and love of neighbor are the two legs of a healthy spirituality. It all starts with God. God joined with our parents to love us into existence. He created the world and everything in it for us and showers us with blessings every day. When we come to know God's love, we begin to love God. We come to love God the same way we come to love people. We must spend time with him, time alone with him. We share our dreams, our hopes and our fears with him. This happens with personal prayer. When we love God and have a relationship with him, we want to please him. It cannot be just you and God isolated from the world. We please God by loving our neighbor. We must be a reflection of God's love for others. I have heard people say: "I do not believe in God but I am a good person." Without God, being a "good person" whatever you define it to be, may not be good at all.

Loving our neighbor also depends upon how you see your neighbor as in the story of the gate keeper. If you see people as evil or bad, you cannot love them. I think that is what is happening in our country today. Some of the politicized issues have become so highly emotional that if someone has a different point of view, they become an evil or bad person. The reality is that they just have a different opinion than yours. There are evil spirits in the world; and sometimes we sin and decide to follow these spirits, but that does not make you an evil or bad person. We need to find the good in others. That is where God dwells. When someone is involved in bad behavior, we tend to think they are an evil or bad person. This is just some bad behavior. Love the sinner, hate the sin. This does not mean that we

cannot stand up for our beliefs, but it always must be done with love. Evil does not overcome evil. Bad behavior is not changed with bad behavior. Healing and change is only going to happen with love.

Love & Peace,

Fr. Jim