

### **30th Sunday in Ordinary Time – 10/25/20**

“When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a scholar of the law tested him by asking, ‘Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?’” The scholar wasn’t being genuine – he was testing him.

A few weeks ago Fr. Tom McNamara, Fr. David Jenuwine, and myself went out for lunch in Saginaw. As we were entering the restaurant a young girl asked Fr. David if he were a Catholic priest. He was wearing his cassock so he was the most obvious choice.

Anyway, she proceeded to ask him his favorite Bible verse. Without even a moment of hesitation Fr. David gave her a quote from Romans equipped with chapter and verse. She appeared quite satisfied.

We sat down and I said nice job David. Do you think she was testing you?

Perhaps she was trying to reinforce the notion that Catholic’s don’t know the Bible and to catch a priest would be something she could boast about for a very long time. But only God really knows.

Actually, I’m glad she asked Fr. David though because I had my own answer to her question.

It was going to go something like this. Well, I’m not going to give you chapter and verse because even the apostles wouldn’t have been able to do that. Chapter and verse came about around the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

But I’m going to give you Jesus’ own words, “Not everyone who cries, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven but only the one who

does the will of my Father.” And then I was going to follow it up with the words of Saint James, “Show me your faith without works and I will show you my faith from my works.”

Now those are actually two of my favorite scripture passages but since I was kind of thinking that she was asking in bad faith it may very well have tainted the sincerity of my answer.

I have no idea what her motives were and I can be a pretty slow learner. It was only a few days ago that I remembered something from my past that reminded me of this situation.

I was very young and I innocently asked a priest about the Rosary and how it was different than babbling like the pagans. This was a direct reference to Jesus’ own words when he taught his disciples how to pray – specifically the Our Father. Jesus said when you pray don’t babble like the pagans thinking they will be heard because of their many words.

I was genuinely interested and wanted a real answer to my question but I don’t recall the priest being very kind about it. Maybe he thought I was being rather disingenuous also. Or maybe he was just tired or having a particularly bad day...only God knows.

Regardless, that has stuck with me for at least forty years and I’ve never felt good about it so whatever the priest was thinking or feeling that day I know he didn’t meet me where I was.

So what’s my point? Only Jesus, who is God, could have known that the Pharisees were testing Him, Only Jesus knew why I asked my

question about the Rosary over forty years ago and only Jesus knows what was motivating that young girl at the restaurant.

Maybe she genuinely wanted to know Fr. David's favorite Bible verse.

Either way, Fr. David gave her a genuine answer that day and she seemed to have left satisfied.

As I said I am a pretty slow learner but I learned something that day even if it took forty years and a few weeks after that to fully grasp it.

Jesus gave the Pharisees a genuine answer in the gospel today even though he knew they were testing Him. "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

How many Pharisees left satisfied that day even though they were initially testing Jesus and how many eventually ended up following Him? Only Jesus knows the answer to that question.

Maybe that girl will come to the Catholic Church one day because of Fr. David's very genuine answer to her question regardless of what her motives may have been.

I hope I truly did learn something that day.

Regardless, let's just do what Jesus said and try to genuinely love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind and then we will be better able to love our neighbor as ourselves regardless of their motives.