

Love God & Neighbor

The classic question is asked of Jesus in this week's Gospel, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life (Luke 10:25)?" Many of us ask questions like this of Jesus in our life of prayer.

However, this scholar of the law is trying to test Jesus and catch Him in saying the incorrect answer. Because Jesus is fully human and divine and always relating from a place of communion with the Father, He does not fall for the trap, but rather Jesus invites the scholar who is wise in the way of the Torah or the first five books of the Old Testament to reflect upon what he has learned, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."

Essentially the scholar of the law summarizes the Ten Commandments into the two basic principles of the love of God and the love of neighbor. Jesus encourages the scholar to keep following these commandments which lead to eternal life. However, the scholar continues to press Jesus by asking Him, "And who is my neighbor?"

Jesus unfolds the parable of the Good Samaritan and the truth that for the man who was left half-dead the one who treated him like a neighbor was not the one who was schooled in the law or the prophets, but rather the one who loved God in the broken and beaten left for dead man who he found along the roadside and took care of with love. In our lives of faith we can find ourselves at times losing the perspective of who needs to be loved around us, because we are focused on following the rules without possessing love in our hearts. Jesus in relating this parable to the scholar is not trying to shame him, but rather is trying to teach the scholar something about the mercy of God. When our lives have been touched by the love and mercy of God then we should have a desire to serve others with compassion in love. As a young priest I was touched deeply by the experiences I had among the poor while serving as a chaplain to Mother Teresa's sisters the Missionaries of Charity while living in Rome, Italy. There were many times when I was tempted to serve my own needs first, but being among the poor and sick brought me to a place of serving others first.

Those were special times that taught me about the mercy and love of Jesus Christ. How have you experienced the mercy and love of Jesus in your life? Who have you shared that experience with so as to encourage them in their life of faith?

Steubenville North Catholic Youth Conference 2019 Youth from our area parishes will be participating in the Steubenville North Catholic Youth Conference in Rochester, MN from July 12-14. This year's theme is "Belong" being derived from the Scripture verse, "See what love the Father has bestowed on us, that we may be called children of God (1 John 3:1)." Please pray for our youth to be open to the power of the Holy Spirit during this special weekend! Generosity is Noticed!

Thank you for your kindness and for the warm welcome I have received in the first weeks that I have been in the St. Patrick, St. Canice and Most Holy Redeemer area. I am especially thankful for the Lloyd and Geraldine Rynda Family and John and Kim LeBrun family for inviting me over to their house for a meal. I am very open to receiving invitations to visit or share a meal or attend a family event in our area. Speak with me personally and we can find a time that will work. I look forward to meeting the families and individuals of our area.

Praise Christ!

God bless you!
Fr. Tom Niehaus