

22ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR B

August 30, 2009

QUEEN OF PEACE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA
Rev. Jeff McGowan

1ST READING: DEUTERONOMY 4:1-2,6-8

You shall not add to what I command nor shall you subtract from it.

PSALM 15

The one who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord.

2ND READING: JAMES 1:17-18,21-22,27

Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

GOSPEL: MARK 7:1-8,14-15,21-23

You disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition.

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Two American soldiers were on leave in Germany and went to church one Sunday. Neither one was Catholic but they wanted to check it out. Not knowing the language, they imitated everything they saw the congregation doing. When the people stood, they stood; when the people sat, they sat; when the people knelt, they knelt. Then the priest asked a question and the man in front of them stood up so they stood up. The whole congregation burst out in laughter. A baby was about to be baptized and the priest had asked the father to stand up.

Our two thousand year old faith has had centuries to develop this liturgy and all our rules. It can be confusing. But at the heart of it is Jesus commandment to love.

Love changes everything. Have you ever noticed people in love? They walk different, they hold hands all the time; they go walking in the rain; the stars burn brighter for them! Imagine sharing from the same dish of chocolate ice cream if you are not in love! And that's the point. Jesus and his disciples were oblivious to the mundane concerns of the Pharisees because they were in love. Jesus was in love with human beings and his disciples were in love with him. What commandment do you suppose he was referring to with these Pharisees?

The only one he ever mentioned was: Love the Lord your God with your whole heart, your whole mind and your whole soul and love your neighbor as I have loved you.

Mother Teresa said, "We don't do great things, we do small things with great love." Love is at the core of our Faith. And love changes everything.

On one of my trips to Haiti; we went to a clinic for sick children. We parishioners at QofP support this clinic. The Sisters who run this clinic are from Louisiana. They approach this with American ingenuity. When a mother brings a sick child here, the mother stays at the clinic with the child. Sometimes this is for a week or more. While they are there, they help with the work and the Sisters teach the moms about nutrition and other preventive measures for the protection of their child and future pregnancies. Well, the children are always glad to see visitors. One of the women in our group gave the children lolly-pops. They were so excited. The little girl on my lap kept holding her lolly-pop up to my mouth. You can guess what I was thinking: germs, diseases, tape-worms! I tried at first to just make a funny face and avoid the candy. But finally, the little girl was so sweet and so generous offering me a lick, I went ahead and licked the lolly pop. She was delighted. I was charmed. She sat for a long while and then went off to join the other children. When she got up off my lap, I noticed a big wet area on my jeans.

When you pick up a baby, you find yourself in love, even if the baby wets on you. Children are so beautiful, so sweet, so charming, we all love them. The challenge of our faith is to love them when they grow up. It is easy to say we love God, but we often find ourselves more in love with the beauty of the created than we do with the Creator. The challenge of Jesus commandment is the challenge of our faith: loving God more than beautiful things and loving our neighbor as Jesus loves us. Love changes everything. Love transcends the conventional wisdom. And love is the challenge of our faith. And we are at our best when we are in love. That is the good news!