

"Blessed are they who follow the Law of the Lord!"

A story is told about Fiorello LaGuardia, who, when he was mayor of New York City during the worst days of the Great Depression and all of WWII, was called by adoring New Yorkers 'the Little Flower' because he was only five foot four and always wore a carnation in his lapel. He was a colorful character who used to ride the New York City fire trucks, raid speakeasies with the police department, take entire orphanages to baseball games, and whenever the New York newspapers were on strike, he would go on the radio and read the Sunday funnies to the kids.

One bitterly cold night in January of 1935, the mayor turned up at a night court that served the poorest ward of the city. LaGuardia dismissed the judge for the evening and took over the bench himself. Within a few minutes, a tattered old woman was brought before him, charged with stealing a loaf of bread. She told LaGuardia that her daughter's husband had deserted her, her daughter was sick, and her two grandchildren were starving.

But the shopkeeper, from whom the bread was stolen, refused to drop the charges. "It's a real bad neighborhood, your Honor," the man told the mayor. "She's got to be punished to teach other people around here a lesson." LaGuardia sighed. He turned to the woman and said *"I've got to punish you. The law makes no exceptions-ten dollars or ten days in jail."*

But even as he pronounced sentence, the mayor was already reaching into his pocket. He extracted a bill and tossed it into his famous Stetson hat saying: *"Here is the ten dollar fine which I now remit; and furthermore, I am going to fine everyone in this courtroom fifty cents for living in a town where a person has to steal bread so that her grandchildren can eat. Mr. Bailiff, collect the fines and give them to the defendant."*

So the following day the New York City newspapers reported that \$47.50 was turned over to a bewildered old lady who had stolen a loaf of bread to feed her starving grandchildren, fifty cents of that amount being contributed by the red-faced grocery store owner, while some seventy petty criminals, people with traffic violations, and New York City policemen, each of whom had just paid fifty cents for the privilege of doing so, gave the mayor a standing ovation.

In this story we see how the mayor of New York City maintained and defended the laws under his jurisdiction, not by merely keeping them himself, but much more than that by showing respect, even to the accused and being compassionate to her and helping her out at the same time. — Today is the 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time, and through the Scripture Readings of today God calls us to a radical way of living. We are called to be more than just moral: God calls us to be virtuous.

Making choices out of love:

Once Baal Shen, a Jewish Rabbi had a dream. He was in Heaven. He saw two empty seats and asked the angel for whom they were reserved. The angel told him one was for him and the other was for his companion if he used his intelligence. Baal Shen went to see his companion and found that although he was a Jew, he was not following the Jewish laws. He was a very happy man with a lovely family. The Rabbi asked him why he was not following the Jewish law. He said that he was very happy that he loved God and his neighbor.

Then Baal Shen visited hell and found two empty seats there too. The devil told him one seat was for him and the other was for his companion. Baal Shen then went to his companion and found that he was a strict Jew who kept all the external laws, but he and his family were not happy.

The Rabbi told him to change but he was not ready to change as he considered himself righteous for observing all the laws. From this Baal Shen concluded that truly good and happy people are righteous. But not all the righteous are good and happy.

We can be true to our calling as Christians if in addition to our love for God and neighbor we also attempt to keep the spirit of the law we practice, intact. - "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath." (**Elias Dias in *Divine Stories for Families***).

Dentist's mirror:

Evangelist Fred Brown used three images to describe **the purpose of the Law**.

First, he likened it to a dentist's little mirror, which he sticks into the patient's mouth. With the mirror, he can detect any cavities. But he doesn't drill with it or use it to pull teeth. It can show him the decayed area or other abnormality, but it can't provide the solution.

Brown then drew another analogy. He said that the law is also like a flashlight. If suddenly at night the lights go out, you use it to guide you down the darkened basement stairs to the electrical box. When you point it toward the fuses, it helps you see the one that is burned out. But after you've removed the bad fuse, you don't try to insert the flashlight in its place. You put in a new fuse to restore the electricity.

In his third image, Brown likened the law to a plumb line. When a builder wants to check his work, he uses a weighted string to see if it's true to the vertical. But if he finds that he has made a mistake, he doesn't use the plumb line to correct it. He gets out his hammer and saw. — The law points out the problem of sin; it doesn't provide a solution. (Quoted by Fr. Tony Kayala).