

## Year A – 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday

Just last week around the country there was a celebration of National Catholic Schools Week. Here at Holy Spirit we had a variety of activities that recognized and celebrated the importance of a Catholic education. We have been blessed with a school that has been recognized for excellence in education and we can be proud of the young women and men who have graduated from our school. I do mean our school since it has been you, the parishioners, who have been generous in your support of the school and its goal of being able to offer a catholic education to our parish community, and several surrounding communities.

We all realize that the heart of any school system is the dedication of the teaching staff. Each of us that have been in any school environment can look back and recall one or more specific teachers who had made a difference in their life. Whether it is grade school, middle school, high school or college some teacher has affected the way you either look at yourself or the world around you. Those who choose to teach in a catholic school make the decision because they see immersion in a faith based environment as being integral to forming the whole character of the student. Over the decades that our school has existed we have been blessed with teaching staffs that have had a passion for a faith based education and we are very grateful for them.

Teaching, whether in public or catholic schools, is more than just another career choice. A person chooses to teach because they have a passion for the subjects that they teach and a desire to pass this information onto another generation of children and young adults. Normally teachers do not get to choose who their students will be and they make adjustments to their methods of presentation to assure to the best of their ability that they convey their passion,

and information, to their students. I can imagine each of us has had a subject or two that were not of deep interest to us, but our teachers did their best to spark some level of interest and understanding in us.

All of today's readings touch upon the teachings of either the commandments or the law. The commandments that are spoken of are the Ten Commandments that Moses received from God that are described in the Book of Exodus. These commandments are the foundational understanding of our relationship with God and our relationship with our neighbor. In the Jewish faith the Law is considered to be the first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Except for the Book of Genesis, these Books contain explanations and expansions of the meaning of the Ten Commandments and how they are to be applied to the life of the Jewish community.

In our readings from the Gospels we often hear of scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees. Sadducees were the priestly class in the Jewish tradition at Jesus' time. They believed that only the first five books of the Old Testament were to be applied as Law. The scribes, who were interpreters of the Law and often Pharisees, and other Pharisees, believed that the first five books of the Old Testament and oral tradition were to be applied in deciding what the Law was. Application of the Law to a situation was normally about what was either permitted or not permitted, and the basis was always on what had been either written or decided in the past.

Our Gospel today has Jesus talking about some of the Ten Commandments. When Jesus begins to teach the people listen very carefully. One reason for this careful attention is that Jesus does

not teach like the scribes teach. We have heard it said that Jesus teaches with authority. We can simply say that this is true because he is God's Son, but the answer goes much deeper.

In recounting the commandments today Jesus uses an introduction, you have heard it said. He then goes on to say, but I say to you, and then presents an entirely different teaching. Again we can say that Jesus can teach with authority because he is God's Son and that he has a deeper understanding of the commandments, but that is not the whole story. Jesus' teaching goes beyond what the commandments either say what to do or what not to do. Jesus is telling the people and us that what is in a person's heart is what determines whether or not they are fulfilling the spirit of the commandment.

You might say that this is easy for Jesus because, again, he is God's Son, but what about us. How are we to know how God wants us to feel in our hearts?

Even though we believe that there are three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in the one God, we often overlook how the three persons relate to each other. In John's Gospel Jesus states that he and the Father are one. So whatever the Father knows, Jesus also knows. The Father and the Son share this knowledge with the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is the love that the Father and the Son share.

That might be good within the Trinity but what about us? The Holy Spirit is the way God extends his unconditional love for us. Again, as Jesus says in John's Gospel he would send us the spirit of truth to teach us, and that spirit is the Holy Spirit. When we truly accept God's unconditional love for us we have only one response to make, to live our lives in loving relationships with those around us and all our fellow human beings. Recall from Genesis that

we are made in the image and likeness of God, the creator of everything in our world and beyond.

How can we do this in a world torn by all types of divisions? The Holy Spirit that resides within each of us is our guide in living out our lives in faithfulness to the love that God shares with us.

We each have to decide whether we are fully willing to let the light of faith and love that is the Holy Spirit shine brightly in our hearts. Are we willing to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in living our lives so as to follow what Jesus says about living out the true meaning of the Commandment?