

From the Desk Of Fr. John

'May they rest in peace'...as we prayed and celebrated the Annual Mass of Remembrance, we recalled all those who have died this past year. We recognized each individual person with prayer and honored them with a memorial candle. Family members or friends came forward to receive this special candle as their names were called. After the Mass, the families were invited to share a meal together in our Fellowship Hall.

Thank you for all who helped plan this special annual Mass. Thank you to all those who helped the families plan and celebrate the funeral...and all the aspects of that celebration. Thank you for the compassion expressed by our Ministry of Consolation...and all those who showed love and support to the families who lost their loved ones.

Let us keep them in our prayers. May we also continue to offer them our support and love. Remember we do have a ministry for those who are suffering Grief...several meet on a regular basis...talking...and listening to one another. They help each other realize that they are not alone. Check the bulletin for the times of their meetings or call Maggie in our parish office...345-4343.

A man with a question raised a very important question. It was related to the commandments...and he wanted to know which was the first of all the commandments. Now he was not asking which was number one in the order of the ten. But he did want to know which was the most important or crucial that he had to do for salvation and being in good standing with God.

The question was addressed to Jesus. Jesus did not go into the commandments directly. Jesus rather spoke of one of the most simple and beautiful prayers that he had learned from his youth...and that all good Jews would have prayed three times a day. The prayer is called the Shema...from a Hebrew word for listening. So the prayer begins... 'Hear O Israel, the Lord your God is Lord alone.' It is the true nature of God to be God...the only one...and there is no other. The Lord is God of all time and all people...not just the chosen people.

The implication of that profession of faith is that if we really recognized God for who He is...we would love Him with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength. But it would necessarily spill over...necessarily require that love of His to be shared and given to others. Jesus said it... 'And the second is like it...love your neighbor as yourself.'

This Sunday we are struck by the Old Testament story of the Prophet Elijah who is directed to the home of a poor widow. She was not an Israelite and not living in Jewish territory...that is what makes the story a bit unusual. This poor widow recognized Elijah as a man of God...even though he was not of her country. The Prophet asks for some food...and though it was a great sacrifice as she explains...because he was a man of God...she offers hospitality and does what he requests...offering all she had. The Lord rewards her generosity...her provisions are replenished for the whole year. She trusted, shared...and God provided and blessed her abundantly.

Jesus is in the Temple area with his disciples. He speaks to His disciples about avoiding what the scribes are doing... 'Beware of the scribes, who like to...' and Jesus identifies what they are doing that is not fulfilling the law... is not loving neighbor as He told the scribe in last week's Gospel. In fact,...Jesus points out one of the most shameful things they do... '(They) who devour widow's houses and for a pretense make long prayers.'

God's love is not being expressed in their lives... even though they claim to be keeping the law of God and demanding others to keep it as well. They are demonstrating 'injustice' to the poor... and not reflecting the love of God...the love God has for each person...especially the poor and unprotected. May we learn the lesson Jesus has taught...and put it into practice.