

WALK the WALK - don't just - TALK the TALK

October 5, 2008, 27th Sunday, A, Matthew 21:33-43

Saul was one of those “*holier than thou*” Pharisees. He persecuted those who became Christians. Saul was a “*Bible thumping, right wing*” Pharisee who believed that everybody needed to be exactly like him. But something happened to Saul after he watched the Pharisees stone Stephen to death. Not long after that killing Saul the persecutor became Paul the Apostle to the outsiders, to those who were different, who spoke different languages, wore different clothes, had different cultures were from different countries.

Story— Tony was a teenage Saul, legalistic and self-righteous. There was a kid in school named Roberto who was kind of effeminate and everybody, including Tony, called him a sissy and made his life hell. When he would go into the shower after gym, they would whip towels and sting him. When Tony was absent, five guys beat him up and made him wear a dress. That night Roger hung himself. Tony wrote in his journal, “*I knew I wasn't a Christian because if I had been I would have stood up for my friend Roberto.*” Tony made changes in his life after that and even became a minister and from that day on he always defended those others picked on. *He bore fruit!!!*

One of Matthew's stories is about Jesus cursing a fig tree. What good is a fig tree that does not bear figs and what good is a Christian who does not bear fruit. Jesus condemned the fig tree and condemns the old and the new Pharisees take the easy out. It's always easier to be a Bible-thumper, to follow every law, to go to church on Sundays, to put money in the collection and volunteer for ministry, than it is to love your neighbor enough to fight for their rights, even when they are different. Jesus calls for us to bear fruit or be condemned to never get into heaven.

Story - One day when it was freezing cold outside John a Sunday school teacher left church with his heavy overcoat on, but came back without the coat. He'd given it to a guy without a coat who was shivering in the cold. One of his students asked, “*What happened to your coat?*” John said, “*Oh, I have another one at home,*” and he never spoke of it again. John was not just a religious man; John walked the walk as well as talked the talk. The Pharisees bore the face of religion but not its heart. We have many people in churches today that make that same mistake.

The Pharisees, the religious leaders of Jesus' day, thought that the purpose of good deeds was to get on the good side of God. They paid alms and made sacrifices so that others would think well of them. Then when no one, or they thought no one, was looking, they would act differently."

How about you? Do you really know Jesus, in your heart as well as in your mind? You're here in God's house today. That's a good beginning, but does the love of Jesus live in your heart? Do your actions speak as loud as your words? Are you bearing the fruit of love? Jesus calls us to walk our talk just as he asked it of the Pharisees and other religious people long ago.

Today is *Respect Life Sunday*. As Catholic Christians we are called by Jesus Christ to walk the walk, not just talk the talk. We are called to respect "**ALL**" life, from womb to tomb and in between. That means loving and fighting for the rights of the unborn but also for their mommies who need all the support we can give them especially when they are often children. *Too many Christians seem to love the baby inside but not the mommy outside.*

It is time for Catholic Christians to demand that our tax dollars be used to provide the very best sex and abstinence education, the very best pre-natal care, the very best early childhood education, the very best food, shelter, medical, psychological and spiritual care for every new mommy. Let us make sure that every pregnant girl will be treated like we would treat Mary.

But Catholics are called to demand that our tax dollars support support the rights of "ALL" God's children: the unborn & mommies too; new born - every child deserves love and dignity; elderly – our seniors deserve to live out their lives with dignity, even if they made mistakes earlier; terminally ill – every human person deserves to live and die with dignity; victims of war & violence – only God can take a life, vengeance is mine says the Lord so war is not acceptable except to defend a direct attack; we must free our streets of violent people and give our full support to the victims of war and violence.

So as Catholic Christians let us talk the talk as we pray that our country will respect "ALL" life but let us not stop there, let us bear fruit as we also walk the walk and call, write, march, vote, and let our elected officials know that we demand that our laws and our tax dollars support and respect "ALL" life, womb to tomb and everywhere in between. (Bless all pregnant girls and women).