

If You Love Me, Keep My Commandments
05/21/17

This past Thursday, 650 people from all sorts of ministries throughout the Archdiocese gathered in Maple Grove to hear Bishop Frank Caggiano speak about building credible communities of faith. He said we need to be family; we need to be loving and accepting, a place where we not only belong but are refreshed. His message essentially taken from today's Gospel. Jesus said if we love Him we will keep His commandments and, according to the bishop, that's a key element of credible communities of faith. I'll get back to that in a minute. First let me talk about love.

Tom thought he figured out a way to remember his wife's birthday and their wedding anniversary. He opened an account with a florist and told him to send flowers to his wife on those dates, along with a note signed, "Your loving husband." His wife was thrilled by the attention, and all was great until one anniversary, Tom came home, saw the bouquet, kissed his wife, and said, "Nice flowers. Where'd you get them?" Tom screwed up because he thought he could put love on cruise control.

In the Garden of Eden, Eve asks Adam: "Do you love me?" Adam answers: "Of course, Eve! You're my one and only." Adam was smart enough to give the right answer, though it wasn't that hard to figure out. Ah, but with God, we're often tempted to let other things take a higher priority in our lives, such as sports, pleasure, money, our egos – the list goes on and on.

In the classic Broadway musical, *Fiddler on the Roof*, Tevya asks his wife, "Golde, do you love me?" After considering her 25 years of washing, cooking, bearing children and laboring beside her husband, Golde answered Tevya, "I suppose I do." That's not exactly the answer God would expect from us, is it. And it doesn't make any difference whether we're talking about loving God or loving our neighbor. God doesn't want us to be wishy washy. It's an all or nothing proposition.

Let me remind you of the lyrics to a couple of oldies but goodies. In the 1967 Beatles hit, they said all we needed was love. There's nothing you can do that can't be done; nothing you can

sing that can't be sung; nothing you can make that can't be made; no one you can save that can't be saved. It's easy. All you need is love.

Or what about the 1965 Burt Bacharach classic with these lyrics: What the world needs now is love, sweet love; it's the only thing that there's just too little of. What the world needs now is love, sweet love; no not just for some, but for everyone. A couple more quotes about love and then I'll move on

Kate Dicamillo says that there is nothing sweeter in this sad world than the sound of someone you love calling your name. Roald Dahl says that if we have good thoughts, they will shine out of our faces like sunbeams and we will always look lovely. And finally, the master himself, Dr. Seuss, once said that unless someone like you cares a whole lot, nothing is going to get better; it's not.

All of these messages bring me back to Bishop Caggiano and his message about forming credible communities of faith. He said that if love is a choice, then we are called to make choices to avoid the major pitfalls of life. Each of us is called to be a new Moses, because God's people are in the wilderness. We need to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and ask Him to help us discern His holy will.

Next week, each household will receive a letter from me, asking all of us to re-commit to our capital campaign, but this time only for a year. I'm asking each of us to prayerfully consider what that would mean to this parish and how continuing to pay down our debt will allow us to expand our ministries and aid more and more of those in need. Until we free up more of our cash, it simply cannot and will not happen. As the bishop said, we need to move away from our indifference and be new Moseses.

Let me paraphrase what Dr. Seuss said: unless someone like us cares a whole lot, nothing is going to get better; it's not. So the question becomes: do we care enough about St. Pat's to make a difference? I hope and pray we do.