

**Shaping the Franciscan Footprint  
Five Important Spiritual Thoughts from the Liturgy of the Word  
...and follow up for the Secular Franciscan  
March 16 – March 22**

**1 – “But if it is by the finger of God that I drive out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you.” (Lk 11:20)**

...Is my behavior the behavior of a person who is a “co-heir” of the Kingdom of God?

**2 -- Jesus replied, “The first is this: The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”**

### **GETTING IT**

The family of four were coming home from Church one Sunday morning in their car. The young boy and girl of the family were fighting in the back seat. The father said: “Stop that fighting.” The son said: “I hate her.” The father responded: “We just came from Church—you can’t hate your sister, you love God and God says love everyone.” The son said: “I do love God, but God doesn’t stick me with a pencil like she just did.” We tend to place God in a separate category from people. God is out there in charge of creation, etc. We are here—in this car, in our job, in this family, in this situation, and so forth.

What was Jesus’ understanding of the scribe in the Gospel? Mark the evangelist comments:

*Jesus saw that he answered with understanding.*

His understanding was that he “got it” in terms of a popular expression. That is, the scribe recognized what Jesus was doing. Jesus had placed the basic religious law of Israel—the law of *Shema*—namely to love God with all your heart *on the same level as* to love your neighbor. He tells that scribe that he was not far from the Kingdom that he was preaching about. It is a remarkable statement for Jesus to make considering the way he felt about the religious leaders of his time. He made the statement because the scribe caught the essence of what Jesus was teaching, that is, he “got it”; he understood his teaching. To truly understand a teaching is to “get it,” that is, to understand it with the thought that goes further than simply knowing some answer.

One of the great things about the teaching profession is that you come to know about some really wonderful people. I did not actually meet this lady, but after hearing about her, it sort of makes me proud to know that I love to teach when I get the chance. She was an extraordinary lady. Only her banker

knew what she had done. Over the years of her life she had set up and contributed to a special fund without withdrawing any of the money. She had been a teacher for 52 years, suffering a stroke and dying when she was 78 years old. She had worked in an elementary school of a small Kansas town for most of her years, and was a person who was known and loved by every child and practically every adult in the community.

At her death, she had directed the president of the bank to give a \$5000 scholarship every year through the counselor at the high school to someone who could not afford to go to college but who wanted to go. No one at the school was to know who had set up the fund. The secret was revealed when the president of the bank finally retired long after the teacher had died, and the fund had been used up. The woman had wanted to serve others, and because she did not have the kind of money that others had, she set it up so that she could serve others for a long time after her death without anyone knowing about it. She "got it." She understood Christianity.

Contrast that with the negative campaigning of the candidates for office in our country at any political election. Most of them are Christian people who want to have an office in which they will supposedly help the people of whatever locale. They often viciously attack the person who is running against him/her. What a horrible example of Christianity! It is a total lack of understanding of the application of the law of love of God and neighbor.

You and I as followers of Jesus are called to a true understanding of the law of love. That is, we are called to "get it." What does it mean? It means the insight of the scribe: this law—namely, that the love of God AND neighbor is on the same level of importance, and that both are the will of God.

Worship of God is not the problem, obviously, since we would not be reading a book like this if that were the case. It is the other part of the law that is the problem: the love of neighbor. It is a topic of Scripture all the time. The problem is that in this area, many of us just do not "get it."

Proof that we do not "get it" comes from the contradictions that we allow in our individual lives. We say we love neighbor, but we refuse to talk to a relative or we carry a grudge or we hate someone. Sometimes we excuse ourselves, even though we are doing things that hurt other people. Perhaps the Lord is saying to us: "You just don't get it, do you?"

What is needed above all in our spiritual lives is *personal responsibility*. That means that we must put our actions on the line, open them up to criticism, allow our actions to be studied by someone else, like the mirror of Scripture. Only then we will understand enough to see what Jesus is trying to teach. Then we will "get it." Once we do, our lives will change, or in Jesus' words, we will not be far from the Kingdom of heaven.

**3 – "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted." (Lk 18:14)**

...Am I a truly humble person?

**4 – “He found him and said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” (Jn 9:35)**

...Jesus has found us, and asks that question. What does the way I live say is the answer?

**5 – “He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them.” (Lk 2:51)**

...Jesus gave us an example of acceptance of others’ authority. Am I as respectful as I should be toward those who have authority over me?