

Homily- John 12: 20-33.

- I was talking with a friend recently about his law school experience and the amount of work it entailed. He told me the first year is very hard because you need to learn all the different laws –the first year is mostly about gaining knowledge.
- After that, you learn how to put the laws to use. So you spend time studying past cases, those real life situations, to see how the law was used in particular situations. These examples serve as guides.
- My friend said to be a really good lawyer you have to know the law – really understand its meaning. You have to revisit the law and read it again and again to be good at applying the law to real life situations. That’s pretty much what lawyers do - when there are important decisions to make, they help apply the law.
- Sometimes that is easy. For example, if the law says to stop at a red light, you must stop. If you don’t stop and you are caught you must pay the fine prescribed by the law.
- Sometimes that is hard. For example if a person refuses to fulfill a military service requirement because of her or his religious beliefs.
- It occurs to me that being a good Christian is very much like being a good lawyer. We need to learn God’s Law and then apply it to our own real life situations.
- Our first reading this Sunday from the prophet Jeremiah tells us that there are laws written on our heart by God.
- Laws that help us to become the best we can be. Laws that are meant to help us live good, happy lives. Laws that help us know God.
- What are those laws? Jesus put them very simply: Love God with all your heart and love others.

- Like good lawyers it is our job as Christians to first learn these laws, really understand what they mean.
- So what does it mean to love God and love others? Jesus gives us the answer in today's Gospel passage when He says: "Whoever loves his life will lose it, whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it."
- Jesus *is not* telling us to hate ourselves and everything around us. Of course not, Jesus is always about love!
- What He *is* telling us is to hate the fact we can make worldly things and wants and worries more important than carrying out God's will. Hate the fact we can be more concerned about ourselves than others. Hate the fact we can place God second. Hate these things so much you reject them, you die to them.
- And Jesus tells us to reach out in love and service to others.
- That is the Law written on our hearts by our Creator. And the best way to really understand it is through prayer and Eucharist and examining our conscience. These things help us to better understand what love is, to feel what love feels like.
- But this law is not written on our hearts to just stay there like words in a book. We need to use this law, apply it to real life situations every day. We must continually ask ourselves the question: "What does God's law require me to do?"
- We see Jesus doing this very thing in today's Gospel passage. Jesus had this same law written on His human heart. He learned it, looked to it for guidance and used it. Before every important event in Jesus' life we read He went off to pray in a quiet place – then He applied God's law.
- Just as law students study past cases to see how the law was used, we have Jesus' life to study. His words, His

actions, His attitudes all serve as case studies for us to examine and learn from.

- Today's Gospel passage presents us with one of Jesus' most difficult cases (situations).
- Jesus knew the trouble that lay ahead of Him. Jesus knew the religious leaders of His day were out to get rid of Him and in a very violent way.
- So Jesus looked into His heart, to that law, for guidance on what to do. We hear Jesus struggle with what to do when He says, "I am troubled now. Yet what should I say? Father, save me from this hour?"
- Jesus could have told His enemies: I will deny everything I taught, everything I stand for – just spare my life. He could have walked away from it all.
- But He didn't. Instead He looked deep into His heart, read the law written there and found His answer. We hear that answer when Jesus says: "It was for this purpose that I came."
- Jesus came to tell the world and show the world the truth: Love of God and love of others leads to eternal life. Jesus wouldn't deny that truth, wouldn't walk away from that truth – even if it would cost Him His life. He knew if He turned away from the truth there would be no Eucharist, no resurrection and no hope for us.
- Jesus showed us the importance of asking the hard question: What is my purpose in life? Jesus showed us how to truly understand God's law and apply in our life.
- At times applying God's law can be great fun: Singing in the Church choir, volunteering to help at food kitchens and clothing drives. Being with loved ones and celebrating, offering someone kind and encouraging words.
- At other times applying God's law will be challenging: Forgiving that person who hurt us; being nice to that

nasty person at work or school; caring for a sick or needy family member or friend. Sometimes we are called to serve others in places or ways we would rather not if we had the choice.

- Remember Jesus told us when we feed the hungry, cloth the naked, care for the sick, visit those in prison – we do these things for Him.
- During these “good times” and the “challenging times” it is important to remember why God wrote that law on our hearts: so that we can be the best we can be; so we can be truly happy and so we can know God.