

Saint Pope John 23rd had a wonderful sense of humor. A journalist asked him, "Your holiness, how many people work at the Vatican?" The pope paused, he thought about it and replied, "About half of them!"

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a scholar of the law tested Jesus by asking, "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."

The Gospel of the Lord

As I was driving through Vermont and I saw a large billboard, "God gave us Ten Commandments, not ten suggestions." Actually, in Jesus day, the religious leaders had developed 248 commandments. The Pharisees intended to trick Jesus when they asked about the greatest commandment. I imagine Jesus smiling and thinking, "I'm glad they asked." Jesus uses the question to give us His commandment of love; loving God, loving our neighbor and loving ourselves.

In order to follow Jesus commandment of love, we need to celebrate who we are and how we have been created.

There is a story Tom and Mary were seated at the head table at their friend's wedding banquet. While the salads were being served, Mary stepped out to make a phone call. After Mary left, Tom accidentally spilled his wife's water all over the table while trying to make room for the salad. Their pastor who was sitting

Comment [MF1]:

at the table, overheard Tom beating himself up for making such a mess. The pastor said “Tom, don’t worry about it, that a very human thing to do.” Later that evening, Mary spilled some coffee and the Pastor overheard Tom saying, “Don’t worry about it dear, that a very human thing to do.”

The famous Monk Thomas Merton loved to laugh and said, “I think the main reason we have so little room for joy is that we take ourselves too seriously.

We can even find ourselves getting weighed down by the “If Only’s and the “What if’s” in life. Have you ever found yourself thinking, “If Only I was younger”, “If Only I had a better job” or “what if I had more money”, “what if I married a different person?” The If only’s and what ifs can prevent us from celebrating the uniqueness of who we are.

In the book “Don’t sweat the small stuff” the author writes, “we tend to believe that if we were somewhere else – on vacation, with another person, in a different career, a different home, a different circumstance – somehow we would be happier and more content. We wouldn’t. The more we can focus on where we are and who you are better able to find peace, joy and love.”

Accepting and embracing our uniqueness can be a challenge, for we are a work in progress. However, no matter our flaws and imperfections, we are made are made of great stuff. On the sixth day of creation, it states, “God created man and woman in His own image and likeness and God found what He created “Very Good”.

Mike, a classmate of mine told me how one of his sons was always putting himself down and calling himself names. Mike finally said, “Son, you were formed by the Master hand, you are not a mistake, God doesn’t make junk.”

It has been said that we need to love ourselves, not in a self-absorbed, arrogant sort of way, but rather in a grateful-to-God-for-creating-us sort of way. It's a well-known fact that unless you truly love yourself, you can't really love others. If you've never felt very good about yourself, it's important to understand just how much God loves you." The Bible states, "we are the apple of God's eyes."

Take five minutes each day this week to do this meditation: close your eyes, quiet your mind, open your heart and pray: Lord, may I be loving, may I be joyful, may my I have a peaceful heart. Pray these words softly and let them seep into you.

Lord Jesus, I come to you today, just as I am. Touch my heart and mind that I may better celebrate who I am and how I have been created. Amen and Amen.