

## **Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Jan 20th 2014**

In reflecting on today's readings, I find myself ruminating on how people worship and choose to be in relationship with the Lord, and how at times we may judge others on their worship style, efforts, etc. It makes me recall a reading that is traditionally read on Ash Wednesday (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21). If one fasts, we are called not to draw attention to our belly aching. Instead we are called to reflect on why we choose to fast. Why is attendance at Ash Wednesday services so high? Why do we feel compelled to wear those as a badge or testament to our faith?

In the First Reading and the Gospel, we are called to be in communion with the Lord. Samuel talks about being obedient instead of sacrifice. Jesus talks about his followers being present with the Lord instead of focusing on the fast itself.

So then, how can we today call ourselves to focus on our personal relationship with the Lord? How can we focus on where we have spheres of influence? How can these efforts get us closer to God?

My husband and I are expecting our first child and I often find myself thinking about what type of parent I will be to our son. How will I help mold him into a loving, humble, nurturing gentleman who advocates for those in need? How will I help him navigate the tricky teenage years and not to succumb to peer pressure? How will I help him find his voice and his passion in life while being true to who he is? How can I help him find his faith and hold true to it?

So many of my friends, family and colleagues have fallen away from the faith traditions in which they were raised. They often question their faith institution in their discernment, as well as the variations of spirituality versus organized religion. For me, at the end of the day, my faith always comes back to a relationship. Relationships need time, constant care and concern and an acknowledgment that there will be at times when one side falls short and a need for forgiveness and humility. I can't help but think that my relationship with God is similar. I need to make time for it, to focus efforts on it and to acknowledge where I am falling short. Personally, I chose to focus on where I can strengthen my relationship with the Lord instead of focusing on where others are with their relationship. Instead, I focus on my efforts and hope that they may be a good example.

When it comes time for my son to ask these similar questions and reflect on his faith life, I pray that I can guide him to ask questions of himself first and not of others. I pray that he has seen me over the years tend to my relationship with God. I pray that this can assist him as he may focus on caring and nurturing his relationship with the Lord and being present to where the Spirit is calling him.

