

Homily  
Friday of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Week of Lent  
March 17, 2023

I'm a math guy. I like to take a methodical approach to ways of thinking. As I read this Greatest Commandment of Jesus again for the countless time and considered just what it means in my life, I looked closely at the 'second' commandment.

Jesus replied, "The first is this:

*Hear, O Israel!*

*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.*

We've all heard this commandment of Jesus many times. We know this is the number one and greatest commandment. We know that it means "God comes first," and that we are to put everything else as 'not first.'

And then I thought about all the times I've also heard that, "...whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me." (Matt 25:40b)

There's a property in mathematics call the Transitive Property. It states that, "if two quantities are equal to the third quantity, then we can say that all the quantities are equal to each other."

If we apply this Transitive Property to the Greatest Commandment and to Matthew chapter 25 verse 40, we get something like this:

If we are to love God AND whatever we do to our brothers, we do to God, then we are to love our neighbor and ourselves just as we love God, with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength. And we are to therefore put everything else as 'not first.'

It's one thing to love our neighbor as ourself, but this takes love to a whole new level when, applying the transitive property, we are to love our neighbor and ourselves as we love God.

Not that we are the same as God, (remember Fr. John in the movie Rudy, "There is a god; I'm not Him.") but we are to love each other with the same passion and commitment as we love God.

Putting math aside, this makes the 'second' commandment the same as the First and Greatest Commandment. It is with Agape love, the unconditional and pure love God has for us, that we are to love Him and each other.

This helps me look more closely at myself and how I choose to behave, at work, here at church and especially at home with my family. Are my actions and words consistent with Agape Love? Am I treating myself and my neighbor as I treat God. Do I love myself and my neighbor as I love God, with everything I can muster.

Here we are right in the middle of this Season of Lent, this season of reflection, of penance, of giving, of stretching ourselves to love more perfectly. How are we doing? Jesus is about to embrace His Passion. Are we ready to pick up our cross? Love, true Agape Love, isn't easy, but when we align our will to His, we see just how powerful love can be.