

Father Dave's Weekly Homily

03/11/12 3 Lent B

-- I imagine many of us can remember our parents telling us something we were supposed to do. And since we were typical kids, we asked *Why?* Promptly we were given the answer *Because I say so!*

-- We can sympathize with parents who answer their children this way. Often, they don't understand why something they are told to do is important or is for their own good. Also, parents don't always have the time to explain the reasons in a way the children will understand.

-- However, as adults, we usually resist that answer, and with good reason. We need to know the reasons why we are told to do something. We have the capacity to understand what is for our own good.

-- Of course, there are exceptions. A commander in the heat of battle doesn't have the luxury of explaining his orders. Emergency situations often require immediate action. But, in general, adults ought to have reasons given to them for the actions they are expected to take.

-- At first, the commandments, as we hear them today, seem to be God telling us to do (or not do) things simply because he says so. Indeed, some Christians take them just as that. They also believe that God is not subject to his own laws and can suspend them at will.

-- However, when we look at these laws closely, they are God's way of establishing a relationship of love with his people. They are more than orders coming from an authority. They are the words of a loving Father telling us how to live our lives in harmony with God's purposes and with each other.

-- As his adult children, we can comprehend how these laws are good for us. With a little reflection we can see how we owe our loving God honor, worship and respect. We can understand how families and society in general flourish when children respect their parents and honor and take care of them, especially in their old age.

-- It's pretty obvious how society cannot get along well when we don't respect human life, the bond of marriage, other people's property and the truth. We know how much trouble follows from envy of what others possess, both on an individual and societal level. Wars have been fought over these issues.

-- Our Catholic tradition has a name for this sense: natural law. It is the law implanted in our hearts. It's the law specified in more detail in the ten commandments.

-- It's also the law which the psalmist praises in our responsorial psalm today. For God's commands are not those of a remote commander. They are gifts to us from a loving Father.

-- Deep in our hearts, we know that. Still, we try to hedge our bets. We have a tendency to respond to them: Well, yes, in general. But shouldn't this or that be an exception to your command? Aren't there times when a "technical" violation of your law will do greater good than keeping your law?

-- Over the centuries, that thinking has gotten us in trouble. Blood has been spilled, innocent lives have been lost, reputations have been smeared...all in the name of fudging God's law.

-- No, God's law has stood the test of time, when we look at it honestly. God has been and continues to be the Father who shows us what is best for us. That's because God truly loves us and seeks what is good for us.

-- We're intelligent enough to know this. Now, all we have to do is put it into practice. Such a simple...yet challenging task this is!