

1. Let me let you all in on a secret: we priests, we're just like you.
  - a. Oh, yes, you think we live in ivory towers,
    - i. that we really don't eat,
    - ii. don't drink,
    - iii. don't shop
    - iv. don't go to movies
    - v. and of course never go to the bathroom!
  - b. You put us up on pedestals, like marble statues and then are shocked and horrified when we are revealed to be people,
    - i. who eat (sometimes too much)
    - ii. who drink (Sometimes too much)
    - iii. who shop,
    - iv. go to movies
    - v. and yes, even occasionally to the bathroom.
  - c. We are made off flesh and blood, not marble,
  - d. and are guilty of all the sins and vices you are,
    - i. and thus stand in need of the same grace and forgiveness that you do.
2. And if you have read the recent spate of articles concerning the relationship between Cardinal Egan and his priests, you know that this need cuts both ways.
  - a. The deep unpopularity of Cardinal Egan among the priests of the Archdiocese has caused some to gossip, others to judge, a few to hate and most to complain.
  - b. And recently our sins have been exposed in the *New York Times* and *New York* magazine for all to see.
    - i. With priests accusing the cardinal of incompetence
    - ii. And the cardinal accusing his priests of betrayal.
3. But many priests, whether or not they have engaged in the gossiping and complaining, have begun doing something that ten years ago would have been almost unimaginable - they have begun pining for Cardinal O'Connor.
  - a. Cardinal O'Connor would have never done the things Egan has done We Say.
  - b. He would never treat people so callously, accusing us of betraying him, others opine.
4. Perhaps, but anyone with half a memory would remember that we complained about him too.
  - a. Yet now we are busy canonizing him, putting him up on one of those pedestals.
5. Recently, I had a conversation with a brother priest, who was reflecting on Cardinal O'Connor's motto - that phrase he had on his episcopal crest. Under the Cardinal's hat and shield was the phrase "there can be no love without justice".
  - a. He was saying that this motto showed that Cardinal would NEVER have treated his priests and his people as unjustly as THIS cardinal has done.
6. Perhaps, but what I could not say to this priest was that I would be more careful than he in trumpeting Cardinal O'Connor's commitment to justice over love.
  - a. For it puts him in some interesting company.
7. Abishai, David's friend and fellow revolutionary, for example.
  - a. He knew that King Saul, David's patron due to
    - i. David's marriage to Saul's daughter, Michal
    - ii. and David's relationship with Saul's son, Jonathan,

- b. Had tried to kill him,
    - i. and now they were locked in a deadly struggle for the throne.
  - c. One night Abishai and David snuck into Saul's camp and found Saul, sound asleep, with his spear stuck into the ground near his head.
  - d. Abishai begs David to let him kill Saul with his own spear.
  - e. For Saul had tried to kill David, more than once,
  - f. and thus to kill Saul was only just.
8. Indeed; the company of those who are so committed is quite vast;
- a. It includes judges in Texas, who execute criminals at an alarming rate-
  - b. It includes politicians in New York, who pass draconian drug laws which incarcerate people for decades, guaranteeing that when they finally are released, they will be hardened prisoners, no reformed criminals.
  - c. It includes presidents, who wage wars in what is fast becoming a vain attempt to find justice for the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>.
  - d. In short it includes everyone for whom justice triumphs over Love.
9. It includes everyone, it would seem,
- a. except David, who inexplicably, allows his enemy Saul to live,
  - b. And Jesus, who says his friends
    - i. bless those who curse them
    - ii. Give to those who take from them,
    - iii. turn the other cheek to those who strike them
    - iv. And do others only what they want done to them.
    - v. His friends are not those who cry out for justice against their enemies;
    - vi. His friends are those who love their enemies.
10. Now there are obvious advantages to this strategy for David;
- a. His showing Saul mercy when Saul sought vengeance was good politics and would make him popular.
  - b. And of course Jesus' use of the golden rule in such a unique way would impress his hearers and make him appear wise.
  - c. But these are not the reasons why David and Jesus do what do
    - i. nor say what they say.
  - d. David does what he does
  - e. And Jesus says what he says,
    - i. because that is how God would act.
      - (1) God loves Saul, David says, that is why he chose him how could he but show mercy to him?
      - (2) God loves us all, Jesus says, how could we but show love to others?
11. To forgive, to give, to turn the other cheek, in short to love even those who do not love us in return
- a. May be what say in our churches, but it flies in the face of everything we do the rest of the week.
    - i. And that is not because we are evil. It because we are just. And that is why we struggle with Jesus' words in today's Gospel - because it would seem that for Jesus that justice doesn't matter
    - ii. indeed some have said that Jesus in today's Gospel advocates love of injustice.
12. But before we rush to judge even Jesus for injustice, we must remember, true justice requires something; it

requires that we see not only what people do, but who they truly are.

- a. And that is why David showed Saul mercy;
  - b. And why Jesus advocated love;
    - i. Because who knew what plans God had yet for his anointed?
    - ii. And who knows what God has yet in store for those for those who are so unjust to us?
  - c. Since only God truly knows us, then only God can judge us; and according to Jesus, God's judgment is to love. Everyone just and unjust and invite all to return the love.
13. We do not like what Jesus has to say.
- a. We might not prefer to judge, incarcerate execute, or destroy
    - i. But we will do it all if we think justice demands it.
  - b. But that is because we think love of enemies is a prerequisite off being a Christian;
  - c. But it is not; it is the goal.
    - i. It is something that is not just done; it is something that is practiced, over and over again, like our Catholic faith itself.
14. It might seem to be impossible -even at times dishonest,
- a. But imagine what our families would look like if we forgave the mistakes of others instead of endlessly punishing them for them
  - b. Imagine what our communities would look like if we accepted those who might be of another racial or economic group instead of punishing them for the supposed sins of others in their group.
  - c. Imagine what our world would look like if after September 11 we somehow learned to put our grief into understanding our enemies instead of destroying everyone who might be one?
15. The world would certainly still have problems - we would not be one of them;
- a. For we would at least be practicing what Jesus preached;
    - i. In our own broken and weak way;
      - (1) we would be seeking to forgive and show mercy.
        - (a) But I guess I should not expect to much of you;
          - (i) for after all, we priests often give such poor example.

16. But then don't look to us,
- a. to those men whom you so often and so wrongly put up on pedestals,
    - i. but to Jesus himself, and forgive;
    - ii. practice forgiveness; practice acceptance;
      - (1) practice it, even if it is hard.
      - (2) Because remember,
      - (3) We've seen forgiveness before;
      - (4) and we've seen acceptance before. (Indicate the crucifix)
        - (a) They are really the only reason why ANY of us are here.