

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Aug 25th 2014

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites.

You lock the Kingdom of heaven before men.

You do not enter yourselves,

nor do you allow entrance to those trying to enter. “

Matthew

As I read this challenging, even harsh, passage from Matthew, all I could think about was Fr. Pat Malone S.J., one of the kindest, gentlest priests I have ever known – the embodiment of what Jesus wanted the scribes and Pharisees, and, by extension, all religious ministers, to be.

We lost Fr. Pat, our pastor at St. John’s Parish on campus, last week to a variety of illness that he had battled courageously for years. I wondered if some of them stemmed from his service as a chaplain at Ground Zero but who knows? Whatever their origin, he was a hero and a saint.

At his wake, many of us recalled how he had stood at the entrance of St. John’s on even the coldest of Saturday evenings opening the door and joyfully welcoming us to Mass. He quite literally allowed “entrance to those trying to enter” the Kingdom. But even when he was hospitalized for months and could not be with us physically, he continued to open that door through his powerful columns in our bulletin.

Always he wrote about compassion and God’s love for us. He wrote about our community and what it means to be the People of God, embracing others in love. Of course much of the letters’ impact came from the way Fr. Pat had lived his whole life from his days in the Peace Corps before joining the Jesuits to his work at Ground Zero then later with Creighton students in the Dominican Republic and finally with us.

Sadly today’s Gospel also makes me think of the opposite of Fr. Pat -- today’s scribes and Pharisees who have their own notions about who is worthy of welcome to the Kingdom with little compassion for their struggles. Enough said.

But today I celebrate Fr. Pat and his life of welcoming people who seek to enter the Kingdom where he is now reaping his reward. He taught us how to live and how to die. Thank you. Blessings. Rest in Peace.

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