Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Sep 10th 2018

The Pharisees seem to be always on the watch, tracking Jesus' every move, to catch him out on some rule violation, some crossing the line. In today's Gospel, the question is whether Jesus should heal a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. Jesus does heal the man, as we would expect he would. Jesus chose to mark the Sabbath by doing good. At first, when I read the Gospel, I focused on the Pharisees and how I felt somehow superior to them because I would choose the good on the Sabbath, to follow the spirit of the law and the rules. I like to think I wouldn't become so mired in strict adherence to the law that I would avoid doing good. But when I thought more deeply about this passage, I started to think about how I mark the Sabbath. Do I choose doing good?

Sure, there's Mass, the gathering in community to worship and pray. Does my goodness stop at the door of the church? That goodness shouldn't stop at the door. What else could I do? Could I stretch out my hand as the man as the Gospel did. He found his hand cured. If I stretch out my hand to help someone, to offer comfort, to make someone's burden a little lighter – all of those would be a good way to mark the Sabbath, something that extends beyond the church doors and extends the Gospel into my own life.

I should move beyond appearances and beyond the letter of the law to the spirit of the law. I should strive to make the Sabbath holy outside the church. Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation, Gaudete et Exsultate, offers a call to holiness in a practical way in the world by serving others and by our own self-control.

I pray for the willingness to serve others on the Sabbath and every day. I pray that I will follow the spirit of the law and the rules. I pray the words of today's psalm:

Lead me in your justice, Lord.
But let all who take refuge in you
be glad and exult forever.
Protect them, that you may be the joy
of those who love your name.

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