

FEBRUARY 10, 2026 FATHER HENK VAN MEIJEL

There is a little strong discussion between the scribes and the Pharisees and Jesus. And Jesus really touches on some very good points.

It is so easy to have all the rules, follow the rules, and think we are good children of God. And there is a movement in the Church again to follow all the rules, but to believe that we have to have all these little rules and then we are okay. And those who do not follow them are less welcome in the Church.

It becomes kind of a fortress Church. You follow all the little rules and you are in the club, and if you are not following all the little rules, you are not in the club. There is a movement like that.

But Jesus also points out how the rules, all these little rules, can be so easily manipulated. He brings up the issue of supporting one's parents, and how a little rule can excuse someone from supporting them anymore. And nothing has changed in 2,000 years.

We just have to read the newspaper and we see all these court cases where laws made to protect people can be easily broken. The more money you have, the more lawyers you can buy, and the more you can manipulate the rules and, quote, "bring justice our way." But nothing has really changed, and actually, it is immoral.

That is what Jesus really is talking about: that the real law should be in our hearts. It is not outside. The law we have to follow is an honest heart.

Of course, we have to follow some rules. But if we follow the rules only because we have to, or because there are repercussions, that is different.

If it is truly of God, it comes naturally. It comes naturally from a God who just wants to love us.

And the more we can go deeper, the more we just want to be good people. We want to be people for others. We want to build the Kingdom of God here on Earth in a good way, and not try to manipulate things our way.

In the first reading, King Solomon is dedicating the Temple, and he prays this great prayer, recognizing the greatness of God. He acknowledges that God cannot be contained in the Temple. “Even Heaven and the highest heavens cannot contain you,” he says.

He recognizes that there is a covenant with God. We each have a covenant with God. And God is a God of forgiveness. But that covenant is so important for each one of us, especially as we go through life. The covenant is supposed to be on our hearts. It is not supposed to be all these little rules.

That takes a lot of prayer. It takes a lot of prayer. And the more we spend time in prayer, in silence, in love with God, the more we see how God operates in each one of our lives. We learn how to be loving individuals in our families, in our homes, and beyond.

Today we also celebrate Saint Scholastica, the sister of Saint Benedict. She is the founder of the Benedictine Nuns and a consecrated virgin who simply wanted to follow God. She had the rules in her heart. She lived by love. She did not need all these little rules.

And of course, Saint Benedict, the father of Western monasticism, is especially known for “Ora et labora”—pray and work. Pray and work. Spend time with God in prayer and let God lead us along the way.

As we spend time with God, as we pray with God, things will happen. Doors will be opened and doors will be closed.

There is a beautiful story of Saint Scholastica just before she died. Scholastica and her brother Benedict met once a year. Benedict lived at Monte Cassino, and she lived nearby. They met annually and shared a beautiful time together.

At the end of one evening, Benedict said, “I have to go home.” And Saint Scholastica said, “No, please stay with me all night and continue our conversation.” Benedict insisted, saying he had to go.

So Scholastica folded her hands and prayed, and a great storm broke out. It prevented Benedict from returning to Monte Cassino, and they had to stay together all night.

A few days later, Benedict saw her soul rise to Heaven. She was clearly a very pure individual, a saint, someone who had God written in her heart.

She did not need all these little sanitary and ritual rules. She had God in her heart. And that is the most important thing.

That is why the saints are such great examples for us—to be people of the heart and not people of the rules.

Amen.