

A woman goes into the confessional:

Bless me father for I have sinned

- the tree out front/house died
- my child struggles in school, having difficulty reading
- the neighbor boy got into trouble
- Mrs. Jones fell and broke her hip

. . . for these and all my sins I am sorry.

The Priest . . . who thought he'd heard it all over the years . . . paused.

He could sense that the lady spoke from her heart . . . but he was puzzled.

"Ma'am," he began, "nothing you just told me is a sin. I'm sorry, but I don't understand."

The lady went on, "Well, father, it's like this. In his old age my Dad came to live with us. Right after he got here he planted a little tree. He tended it regularly and kept it watered. He took care of the flowers, too.

Every night he read to my daughter and helped her with her reading. We work a lot of hours and don't always have time to help her with her homework.

And in the afternoon he would often work on things . . . fixing and tinkering. Often times the teenage boy next door would be with him . . . helping . . . learning to use the tools. The boy's parents are divorced and he seems to enjoy being with my Dad. Then, a couple times a week, Dad would go shopping for Mrs. Jones two doors up. She uses a walker and doesn't get around too well."

"Dad sounds like quite a guy," said the priest.

"Yes," she said sadly, "he was. He died two months ago. . . and the problem is that I didn't realize what a great person he was till he was gone.

I was busy . . . too busy. Too busy to notice him or get to know him better. Too tired or preoccupied to even just sit and talk with him. I never realized all that he did."

"I didn't revere him . . . and now he's gone.

Since he passed away . . . the tree has died

. . . my daughter struggles with her reading

. . . the neighbor boy got into trouble one afternoon

. . . and Mrs. Jones fell and broker her hip leaving
the market. . .

. . . I didn't revere him while he was here . . .

for this and all my sins I am sorry."

As it is with the old man in the story . . . so it might be with some of
us and God.

How many of us are too busy to revere God?

How often are we too preoccupied with life to notice God?

How many days end with not enough energy left to pray?

When is the last time we simply sat and talked with God?

We don't want to wake up one day and realize that God is no longer
in our life.

God would never leave us . . . but we can surely leave God.

And if we leave God behind we leave all of God's gifts and
care behind.

The truth is . . . our lives mirror our love and reverence for God.

We fill our lives with the things we love . . . and the pattern of our days reflect what we have reverence for.

Just witness the love we have for sports and the way we revere the games and the players. If we would give to God a fraction of that part of us that is given over to sports . . . things in our country would improve dramatically.

As an example – the other day a man told me – a bunch of folks rented a bus (Friday night) – drove for 5 hours to Notre Dame. They stayed in a hotel. Next morning after breakfast, got on the bus, went to the college. They arrived and headed for the tailgate party. Spent the day on campus (other sporting games). Finally, football game 3 hours (?) with all the tradition, pomp and circumstance. Game over – back on bus – 5 hours home.

Many will say – sounds like a great weekend! . . . I'm not arguing that point.

The point is to see how our lives mirror what we really love and revere! . . .

. . . when is the last time we spent that much time and wealth and energy on God?!

Part of Jesus' mission of saving humanity from its self-destruction

was . . . is . . . to re-acquaint us with the Father. . .

. . . to re-establish the living relationship between Creator and creature . . . to re-awaken us to God.

In the Gospel Jesus . . . having just finished dealing with the

Sadducees . . . is now in a bout with the Pharisees and the legal scholars who are so preoccupied with their own agenda of salvation that they have lost all true reverence for God. They can't even see the holiness of Jesus much less revere Him.

Too busy . . . too preoccupied . . . too centered on self . . .

too in love with their ideology . . . so that the only god they can reverence is one of their own making.

Their whole life is a weekend at Notre Dame . . . and not only are they lost in what they worship . . . but the people they lead suffer as well!

So Jesus says to them: Love God with your whole heart, soul and mind! And love your neighbor as yourself!

Everything that ever was . . . is . . . or will be for human beings is wrapped up in these two commands.

God is ever aware of us.

We need to be aware of God. And in true awareness of God we come to revere God.

That's why the Scriptures tell us that "fear of the Lord" is the beginning of Wisdom . . . because we become aware of the magnitude of God . . . and we step back and tremble.

And then Jesus comes along and says – "Hey. . . listen. The God who makes you tremble . . . well, He loves you! He would never harm you. He wants you to come to Him. I know this because He is my Father and He has sent me to show you the way home."

Love is a decision.

It's not a feeling . . . it's a decision. . . a choice we make.

And sometimes it's a choice that we have to keep on making . . . again and again . . . day after day . . . moment by moment . . . depending on how rough life may be at a given time.

In Jesus' presence the Pharisees Sadducees and lawyers have a decision to make.

The watching crowd has a decision to make.

The whole world . . . coming to know of Christ . . . has a decision to make. We . . . baptized in Christ . . . have a decision to make.

There is no deception here . . . not in God.

God has no hidden agenda in wanting our love . . .
nor does God have some hunger that needs filling.

God . . . simply . . . is love.

And the only way to be with God . . . is to be with Love.

What a tragedy it would be to wake up too late . . .

and realize that we had completely missed the Great Love
in our life.