



Reflection from Fr. Garry

"Because I said so!"

How many parents have said that when a child asks (for possibly the 10th time) why they can't have a candy bar before dinner, or why they can't stay up past their bedtime? Parents sometimes resort to that reasoning because they know children aren't cognitively able to understand why something that appears good is not really good for them. Adults (ideally) are able to understand this, and are capable of making such decisions for themselves.

Yet religions often treat their members as if they are children who need to be told what to do because they can't make decisions for themselves. A recent example in the news: The bishop of New Orleans officially declared that alligator is fish, not meat, allowing people to eat it on Fridays in Lent. Were people not able to decide for themselves whether eating or not eating alligator was a good way for them to observe Lent? Another downside to this dynamic is that people become accustomed to responding like helpless children, as evidenced by the number of people who had been asking the bishop to rule on the issue.

People often do the same thing in citing scripture as the authority. An example: Some people point to a few obscure passages in the Old Testament to condemn homosexuality, and therefore, homosexuals. These people seem to hold on to this "Because I told you so!" mentality despite the fact that there is much more to understand about human nature and human sexuality than that simplistic view.

In some ways it is much easier to be like children. We can always find someone to tell us exactly what we should do in order to be good, right, holy, patriotic, etc. It also allows us to avoid blame if we do something wrong. After all, we were just following orders, so we are not responsible (we think). I suspect some of those who stormed the Capitol building on Jan. 6 were of this mindset.

Jesus didn't set down a list of rules which had to be followed. In fact, he often broke the rules of his religion when love called for it. He called people to follow him by discerning how love called them to behave in any particular situation. Children (or child-like thinking) can't do that. Only people who are growing and maturing in faith can do that. May we use this Season of Lent to mature a little bit more in our faith.

~ Peace,

Fr. Garry