Fr. John Sassani
Homily Given on August 30, 2009
Twenty-second Sunday of Ordinary Time
Liturgical Year B

At the 10AM Mass, I always ask the kids a question. Today I'll ask the adults. Are you an introvert or an extrovert? A spender or a saver? And to the kids, is your room neat or messy?

My room is a mess – shoes in a clump, desk covered with papers, envelopes, books. I have a friend who is a neat fanatic. His shirt is always tucked in, his tie knotted perfectly. His house is meticulous. His car always looks like it's brand new. He's orderly – in an out-of-control way.

The Gospel today is about order. The Pharisees understood, quite correctly, that faith in God brought order to life. Faith in God gave order to personal and social relationships. Faith gave order to education and governments. Faith marked out responsibilities of the poor and disenfranchised. Yet for some, faith led to a blessed rage for order. Many of us would consider all of that washing in the Gospel today a bit excessive – even in the face of the H1N1 flu.

Jesus didn't think all of it was meaningless, but He thought the Pharisees were missing the forest for the trees. The problem is the Torah. The first five books of the Bible provide 613 laws to be followed. The Pharisees were striving for perfection by keeping all the laws of the Torah. They all seemed to some to be equally important. Jesus thinks differently. The laws give form and shape to faith – but faith precedes the law.

St. James describes it: humbly believe God's word and then act on it. Be doers, not only hearers. We come to hear God's Word, and Christ in the Eucharist takes what we hear and uses it to inculcate selfless thinking so that we can flourish in selfless acting.