

## Pastoral Reflection for the Fifteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

July 10, 2022

*Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*

I have a very close friend who is at St. Luke's Hospital coming close to eternity as I write and who may have made that journey by the time this reflection goes to print. It has me thinking about eternal life these days. It struck me that weeks and weeks can go by without my giving a thought to eternal life, although it happens more often now that I am 82. Present life is so compelling. Who has time to contemplate the what ifs of the infinite? The practical displaces the spiritual every time. The need to fix lunch seems more immediately imperative than preparing for the life of the world to come.

Yet here in today's gospel comes this professional religionist, testing Jesus with a pious question about everlasting life. They trade textbook responses and are in apparent agreement that love is the key. Then Jesus puts down the textbook, launching into a story that changes the elements of the argument altogether. It's not just about a classical expression of loyalty to God and neighbor. Step it up a level and show mercy to your enemy, who is your REAL neighbor. What a challenge!

Jaws drop whenever Jesus teaches. He confounds our easy piety and self-promoting righteousness. Jesus invites us to love as God does, beyond the nice boundaries of our comfort zone. For an amazing adventure in extreme loving, we have only to listen to him.

*Sister Chabanel Mathison, O.S.U.*