

Last Thursday we celebrated the great feast day of St. Bartholomew, which although it was indeed a great feast day, it made it so that the normal Thursday reading was replaced with the reading for the feast of St. Bartholomew. And we **would** have heard, “On that day Sadducees approached [our Lord,] saying that there is no resurrection.” And to make a long story short, our Lord silences them saying, “You are misled because you do not know the scriptures or the power of God.”

This is why on Friday, the day following, “When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together” and **they** approached our Lord, also trying to test Him, saying: “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” And, of course, our Lord responds with two commandments, which encapsulate the entire law — love of God and love of neighbor.

And in response to both of these events, our Lord tells His disciples, “Do and observe all things [that the Pharisees and Sadducees] tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice.”

They weigh you down with burdens with no means of removing them; they perform works only to be seen; they seek to be honored and exalted, but they themselves will be humbled.

And then we arrive at today's Gospel passage, with those perhaps most damning words of our Lord: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! Woe to you, blind guides, you blind fools! Woe to you!" That is, be accursed, be damned, to Hell with you.

And whenever we hear these infamous "woes" of our Lord, it seems that there are two responses that we can have. The first response, we can point the finger away from us — those scribes and Pharisees were terrible people, such hypocrites, awful! You know what, I know some people like that in my own life! Hypocrites! They speak as if they are one way and live as if they are another.

The second response, we turn the finger away from others and in towards ourselves — "Lord, how often do I demand more from others, more than I even require of myself? Lord, how do I prevent others from holiness, from attaining eternal life? How is it that I stand in the way of the narrow gate, preventing others from entering? Lord, how many times must I sin? And how many times must I lead others to sin before I stop doing so? Who have I led to sin, who have I led astray by my own words, by my own actions? O Lord, my God, am I a hypocrite? Am I no different than the scribes and Pharisees?"

Today we approach this altar, this altar of God Most High, and we join ourselves in our hypocrisy to He Who is Truth Himself upon this altar, so that we ourselves might become the offering and so be lifted up by the heavenly angels to our Father's Altar on High, that we might be made glorious, that all of the sins that bind us might be loosed, according to the power granted Peter and the Church yesterday in the Gospel.

Lord, make us authentic disciples. Do so today.