

Controversy over Standards Saturday after Ash Wednesday February 13, 2016
8:15 AM Is 58:9b-14; **Lk 5:27-32** (The only thing that draws people to God is charity,
divine love.)

“The Pharisees and the scribes complained to his disciples saying, ‘Why you do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?’”

The background of this question is the kosher rules of the Jewish Torah, which forbids a practicing Jew from eating with gentiles or sinners. This became a very prominent problem in the early Church because the Church brought in Jews who were baptized and then gentiles who were baptized, and then of course naturally the Church wanted to celebrate together Holy Eucharist. But those Christian Jews who were still following the Law said, “Oh we can’t have Eucharist with those gentiles.” And that is what created **great controversy** that you read about in Galatians, **St. Paul’s Letter to the Galatians, where he gets very angry at those who were dividing the Christian community.** Well, **Jesus himself already had started to break down that kind of rule by eating with tax collectors and sinners and gentiles.** So St. Paul was absolutely right about that part of what he said, and yet it remained a problem for many people because it was so ingrained.

I remember when I was at a Seder meal with a Jewish rabbi who was, in fact, leading the prayers and the rituals and describing everything. He was a very charming man, but he wouldn’t eat with us and he explained, “Well, I can’t eat with you because you are gentiles.” He didn’t mean it in a derogatory way, but it sounded that way. Then there was some kosher wine. I said, “Well, you can have the kosher wine; it’s all kosher.” He said, “No, I can’t do that either. It’s because you’re here I can’t drink it.” So that’s the background of this.

Now **Jesus’ point is sick people really do need the physician, and he has come to help those who are sick.** This means if we are going to follow him, **we cannot have contempt for**

people who don't live up to our standards. Yes, the truth is a lot of people don't live up to Christ's standards, but he did not have contempt for them. We have in our Catholic Church the so-called "**Chreasters.**" They only show up on Easter and Christmas. Their devotion is not real intense, but we have no business having contempt for them or disdain. And I often hear that around Christmas or Easter: the good faithful Catholics talking down about them. Jesus said, "Healthy people don't need a physician." **Those of us who are healthy, strong have to be considerate of those who are not healthy and strong, and not hold them in contempt.** This a very important point. It is a constant temptation to be like the Pharisees and the scribes complaining about other people who aren't really good enough, devout enough or devoted enough or committed enough. **The only thing that draws people to God is charity, divine love.** If we can love them, we can be an instrument in God saving them, but **without love we have nothing to offer.**