

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/102520.cfm>

Any questions? (pause)

Seriously, after hearing Jesus respond to this question about “what is the greatest commandment”, a simple “Amen” could suffice for a homily.

That’s because Jesus’s answer is so simple and clear. Nothing needs to be added to it. Not even his adversaries could contradict it.

To this day there is no answer more concise or more convincing: Love God completely and your neighbor as yourself. This contains everything God commands.

The verse that Jesus quotes is Deuteronomy chapter 6 verse 5. That verse was part of the *Shema*, the basic and essential creed of Judaism, the sentence with which every Jewish service still opens, and the first text which every Jewish child commits to memory.

It means that to God we must give a total love, a love which dominates our emotions, a love which directs our thoughts, and a love which is the dynamic of our actions. A total commitment of life to God.

The second commandment that Jesus quotes comes from Leviticus 19:18. Our love for God must issue in love for others.

But note the order of these two commandments; it is love of God first, and love of others second. This is the proper order of charity. Love of others must flow out of our love for God.

It is only when we love God that others become lovable. When we take away the love of God from the equation, we will look at human nature and become angry, pessimistic and callous. The love of humanity must be firmly grounded in love of God.

He who keeps both these commandments has fulfilled all the others. This **IS** our faith, summed up in two short sentences. This is everything that God expects of us.

However, do we truly know what it means to love God with all our being and our neighbor as well?

While walking my dog several weeks ago, I saw a sign in the front yard of a house in my neighborhood.

The sign's introduction states: "In this house, we believe:" and then goes on to list several statements or beliefs. The first thing a person of faith notices immediately is the absence of any mention of God on the sign.

Six different beliefs are listed. I don't want to distract from our topic, so I will only mention the last two:

"Love is love"

"Kindness is everything"

I don't know what they mean by saying "Love is love" because we know that **God** is love. Without love of God, no other love can exist.

And while kindness is certainly a good thing, in today's Gospel, Jesus is clearly telling us that **love of God and neighbor**, is everything.

This past Thursday, on the feast day of St. JP II, the Gospel reading has Jesus proclaiming to his disciples:

"I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing! There is a baptism with which I must be baptized, and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished! The fire that Jesus talks about is his Divine Love that will be set ablaze by his crucifixion, death and resurrection.

But then Jesus continues with these uncomfortable words:

"Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division."

And then he goes on to talk about how families will become divided, even the most intimate relationships will be at odds; father against son, daughter against mother...

This division Jesus speaks of is the division between those who accept the love of God and those who reject him.

The division is caused by the people who turn their backs on God and refuse to believe in the truth that is Jesus Christ; Savior of the world, and the source of all true love.

Much of the division we see in our world today, has as its root cause, the rejection of God and his commandment of love. To speak of love or attempt to practice love without knowing God as the very core of our lives is not love at all. Sure, it might be kindness, it might be politeness, it might make us feel good about ourselves, but it's not sacrificial self-giving love at all.

It is only when we love God with all our heart, soul and might, will it be possible to love our neighbor.

Robert Cardinal Sarah has a book titled, God or Nothing, in which he states, "In responding to God, we base our life on him...and faith is a covenant of love that causes us to become one and the same being with the beloved person." God is the identity for which we are all created.

So how do we meet the challenge of these two greatest commandments? By making God the center of our everyday lives. By making him our divine, closest friend.

We can take even the smallest snippets of time during our busy days to speak with him. "Praise you Jesus", "Thank you Jesus", "Help me Lord, I need you", "I can do nothing without you". Or stop what you are doing for a brief moment and say a prayer for someone you know who needs God's help.

Make your actions show that you love God above all else. Make time to attend Mass and/or online Mass more than once a week - make that sacrifice for him. Attend confession once a month. Sacramental grace unites us with the Lord and his love.

Have a daily prayer routine: Read some scripture, or pray the rosary or even one decade, or the chaplet, or the Jesus prayer. And don't allow yourself to be knocked off your prayer course when challenges present themselves.

Treat your spouse, children and co-workers like you would treat Jesus himself. Like St. Paul writes in our second reading, be imitators of the Lord, receive his word with joy, and become a model for others.

It can be hard to be joyful and positive in these times but make an effort each day to be aware of what influence you are having on other people. Because there are so many people right now who are struggling, who are depressed and spiritually lost.

Your example and influence have great power. Be the light of Christ to them. That will happen naturally if you make the Lord **your** light, and **your** love.