

'LOVING GOD & NEIGHBOUR'

4 November 2018 – 31st Sunday Ordinary Time

From St Bernard of Clairvaux we learn that love is always on the way.

As we reflect on the Gospel today we imagine a dynamic love, in motion.
Not static, but deepening.

AS WE EXAMINE OUR OWN LIVES, WE ASK OURSELVES WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT?

We could list many.

Jesus in today's Gospel highlights two commandments from the many, many Jewish laws.

Though separate and well-known in the Old Testament, one is in the *Book of Deuteronomy* chapter 6 and the other is in the *Book of Leviticus* chapter 19. Jesus brings them together.

BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY 6:1-6

The setting for the first commandment is the Jewish people who have been on the Exodus for many years and now are about to cross into the promised land.

HOW WILL THEY BE FAITHFUL TO GOD?

HOW WILL THEY LOVE GOD NOW IN THIS NEW CHAPTER OF THEIR LIVES?

HOW WILL THEY TEACH THEIR CHILDREN AND FUTURE GENERATIONS ABOUT GOD?

HOW WILL THEY CONTINUE TOGETHER ON THIS JOURNEY WITH GOD?

Let us read from *Deuteronomy*.

'Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that the LORD your God charged me to teach you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, so that you and your children and your children's children may fear the LORD your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has promised you. Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart.'

Deuteronomy 6:7-8 goes on to name ways of remembering

*'Recite them to your children and talk about them
when you are at home and when you are away,
when you lie down and when you rise.
Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead,
and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.'*

WHAT PRACTICAL WAYS TODAY DO WE HAVE, TO REMIND US TO NEVER FORGET TO LOVE GOD?

BOOK OF LEVITICUS 19:18

From the whole book of requirements for living with family and with strangers and with creation in Leviticus, Jesus takes one to highlight, the second half of verse 18.

In Leviticus 19:18 we hear

*'You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people,
I am the LORD.'*

In the immediate context of not loving others by attitudes and acts of vengeance and grudges, the command is *'But you shall love your neighbour as yourself'*.

GOSPEL OF MARK 12:28-34

Let us now hear the Gospel passage and see how Jesus combines these commandments.

*'One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another,
and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him,
'Which commandment is the first of all?'*

Jesus answered, 'The first is,

*"Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one;
you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength."*

The second is this,

*"You shall love your neighbour as yourself."
There is no other commandment greater than these.'*

*Then the scribe said to him, 'You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that
"he is one, and besides him there is no other";
and "to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding,
and with all the strength", and "to love one's neighbour as oneself",—
this is much more important than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.'*

*When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him,
‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’
After that no one dared to ask him any question.’*

Sometimes we are tempted to think that it is enough to love God,
only by loving our neighbour.
But Jesus is very clear.
Both commandments are together, but loving God is number one.
With all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, with all our strength.

BAPTISM

HOW DO WE KEEP THIS FOCUS ON THE TWO GREATEST COMMANDMENTS BEFORE US?

In the baptismal ceremony of children,
after naming the child publicly,
and after the parents publicly request baptism for their child,
this following question is put to the parents -

*“You have asked to have your child baptized.
In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him (her)
in the practice of the faith.
It will be your duty to bring him (her) up to keep God’s commandments as Christ
taught us,
by loving God and our neighbour.
Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?”*

The parents clearly are required to highlight and focus on these two commandments.

Sometimes the celebrant will add the whole quote from Jesus on these commandments.
In baptismal preparation parents can be invited to name how they intend
to make these two commandments a reality in the life of their child over the years to come.

WHAT WILL BE VISIBLE IN THEIR HOMES SO THAT THEIR CHILD CAN SEE AND READ THESE COMMANDMENTS BY THEMSELVES AND AS A FAMILY?

AT WHAT SPECIAL TIMES WILL THEY READ THESE COMMANDMENTS TO THE CHILD OVER THE YEARS TO COME?

HOW WILL THEY PRAY THESE COMMANDMENTS WITH THEIR CHILD?

IN WHAT WAYS WILL THEY UNDERTAKE TO SHOW THEIR CHILD HOW TO GROW IN LOVING GOD AND NEIGHBOUR?

For adults preparing on a journey to being baptized,
the catechumenate journey takes time to unfold these two great commandments.
In prayer and reflection and teaching and discussion and in celebration.

WHAT PRACTICAL WAYS TODAY DO WE HAVE FOR NEVER FORGETTING THESE TWO COMMANDMENTS?

ON OUR MOBILES, AND COMPUTERS AND OTHER IT?

IN OUR DIARIES. VISIBLE ON OUR WALL AT HOME OR IN A FRAME ON OUR DESK?
IN OUR CAR? HANDBAG? CASE? TRAVEL BAG?

WHERE DO WE PLACE THE TWO COMMANDMENTS OF JESUS
SO THAT WE ARE CONTINUALLY REMINDED HOW ESSENTIAL THEY ARE FOR US?

Let us pray.

Fr. Gerry

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/110418.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook04112018>]

[St Bernard of Clairvaux – On Loving God](#)

[Image: The Great Commandment | www.stjosephsbrackenridge.com]

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

Gospel of Mark 12: 29 - 31

Jesus answered, “The first is,
“Hear, O Israel: the Lord our
God, the Lord is one;
you shall love the Lord your
God with all your heart,
and with all your soul, and
with all your mind, and with
all your strength.”

The second is this,
“You shall love your
neighbour as yourself.”
There is no other
commandment greater than
these.’

WITH ALL YOUR 