Friday of the Third Week of Lent

Gospel text (*Mk* 12:28-34): One of the scribes came to Jesus and asked him, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" Jesus replied, "The first is this: Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these..."

Love: the "First" Commandment vs. the "New" commandment

EDITORIAL TEAM evangeli.net (based on texts by Benedict XVI)
(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today, to the fundamental question about the "first commandment", Jesus Christ responds "Law in hand". In Luke 10:26, the Lord answers by asking the scribe "what is written in the Law?" He gave the exact answer. However, Jesus Christ, gradually revealing His own mystery, brought "the answer" to unsuspected horizons.

A characteristic theme of John's writings is love. 1st The Source of love is God: "God is love" (1Jn 4:8) (John is the only New Testament author who gives this "definition" of God). 2nd God —through the incarnation and death of His Son Jesus Christ— has shown His love was not limited to oral statements; rather He truly committed and "paid" personally. 3rd Contemplating this "excess" of love the Christian is called to an active response, summarized in the "new commandment".

—In the Old Testament, the normative criterion was taken from man ("as yourself"). In the New Testament Jesus presents as a motive and norm of our love, He Himself: "As I have loved you".