

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." The scribe said to him, "Well said, teacher. You are right in saying, He is One and there is no other than he. And to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." And when Jesus saw that he answered with understanding, he said to him, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God." And no one dared to ask him any more questions

"There is no other commandment greater than these."

Fr. Pere MONTAGUT i Piquet
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today, Lenten liturgy presents us Love as the deepest root of our self-communication with God: "The soul cannot live without love, but always wants to love something, because she is made of love, and, by love, I created her" (Saint Catherine of Siena). God is almighty love, extreme love, crucified love: "It is there [on the Cross] that this truth can be contemplated" (Benedict XVI). This Gospel is not only a confirmation of the prayer the pious Jew used to say every morning, but it is also a self-revelation as to how God —through His Son— wants to be loved. With a Commandment from Deuteronomy: "you shall love the LORD, your God" (Deut 6:5) and another one from Leviticus: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Lv 19:18), Jesus enforces the plenitude of the Law. He loves the Father, as a true God born out of a real God and, as the Word made Flesh, He creates the new Mankind of the sons of God, brothers loving each other with the love of the Son.

Jesus' call to communion and mission asks for participation in its very nature, it is an intimacy into which we must enter. Jesus never claims to be the goal of our prayer and love. He thanks the Father and constantly lives in His presence. The mystery of Christ attracts us towards the love for God, invisible and inaccessible, while —at the same time— it shows us the way to identify our sincerity in our love and life for our visible and present brother. The burnt offerings in the altar are not the most valued ones, but Christ burning as the unique sacrifice and offering, so that we may become in Him a single altar, a single love.

This unity of knowledge and love woven by the Holy Spirit allows God to love through us and to use all our capacities, while allowing us to be able to love as Christ does, with the same filial and fraternal love. What God united in love; man cannot sever. This is the greatness of He who submits to the Kingdom of God: self-love is no longer an obstacle but rapture to love the one and only God and a crowd of brothers.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“The present days [of Lent] are especially suitable to practice the good of charity, so that those who want to undertake the Passover of the Lord with sanctification of soul and body should try to acquire this grace above all.” (Saint Leo the Great)

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“Faith is giving space to this love of God; it is making room for the power, for the power of God, for the power of One who loves me, who is in love with me and who wants this joy with me. This is faith. This is believing: it is making room for the Lord to come and change me.” (Francis)

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“... The apostle St. Paul reminds us of this: He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, N° 2196)