Friday of the Twentieth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mt* 22:34-40): When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a scholar of the law, tested him by asking, “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.”

“You shall love the Lord, your God... You shall love your neighbor as yourself”

Fr. Pere CALMELL i Turet
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Today, a teacher of the law asks Jesus “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” (Mt 22:36), the most important one is the first commandment. The answer, however, speaks of a first commandment and of a second commandment. Two inseparable rings, which are the very same thing. Inseparable, but a first one and a second one, a golden one and a silver one. The Lord takes us to the depths of Christian catechesis, because “The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments” (Mt 22:40).

This could explain the classic commentary of the two woods of the Lord's Cross: the upright beam stuck in the soil is the verticality, looking at heaven towards God. The crossbar represents the horizontality, the relations with our fellowmen. In this image there is also a first and a second. The horizontal beam would be at ground level if we did not have the vertical beam. So the more we desire to raise the level of our service to others horizontally, the taller our love for God must go. Otherwise, dejection, fickleness, demanding compensations of any kind, will get easily hold of us. St. John of the Cross says: “The more a soul loves, the more perfect it is in its love, and hence it follows that the soul which is already perfect is, if we may say so, all love, all its actions are love, all its energies and strength are occupied in love.”

The saints we know allow us to see how, in fact, their love for God is expressed in many different ways, and gives them a great amount of initiative when it comes to helping their fellowmen. Today, let us ask the Mother of God to fill us with the desire of surprising Our Lord with deeds and words of affection. Thus, our heart will be able to find a way to surprise those who live and work next to us, with some nice little detail; and not only on special days of festivity. For everyone knows how to do this. Surprise others! A practical way to think less about ourselves.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “You want me to tell you why and in what measure God is to be loved. I reply, the reason for loving God is God himself, and the measure, is to love without measure” (Bernard of Clairvaux)

- "Nothing should come before the service of God. Such "submission" to God is not destructive of the creature. The creation is configured in such a way that it invites this adoration. The rhythm of our life only vibrates correctly if it is imbued with this force" (Benedict XVI)

- “... The worship of the one God sets man free from turning in on himself, from the slavery of sin and the idolatry of the world.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 2097)