August 25th: Memorial of Saint Louis, King of France

Gospel text (*Mt* 22:34-40): When the Pharisees heard how Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they came together. One of them, a teacher of the Law, tried to test him with this question, «Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the Law?». Jesus answered, «'You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind'. This is the first and the most important of the commandments. But after this there is another one very similar to it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'. The whole Law and the Prophets are founded on these two commandments».

«You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind»

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Today our hearts are moved when we re-read the testament written by the King of France Saint Louis (1214-1270) to his son heir to the throne: «My dearest son, my first instruction is that you should love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your strength». We see, therefore, that today's saint had the lesson well learned. That advice of the king coincided precisely with the «first and the most important of the commandments» (cf. Mt 22,38). Moreover, he assured his son «there is no possible salvation without it».

Louis IX King of France is remembered as a monarch who strove for justice and peace among Christians, and also for the love of the poor. If it is true that a man is known for his death, it must be remembered that the mortal remains of this holy king were soon revered by his own subjects, since his people felt a great love for him. How is it possible? Today it is infrequent that people feel admiration and gratitude towards their political authorities. Here we must refer to the essential complement of the first commandment: in the words of Jesus Christ, «But after this there is another one very similar to it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'» (Mt 22,39).

Let's take another look at the mentioned testament: « Be just to your subjects, swaying neither to right nor left, but holding the line of justice. Always side with the poor rather than with the rich, until you are certain of the truth». Jesus was tested (cf. Mt 22,35) when asked by a teacher of the Law. Well, here we have the "proof"! Am I a sower of justice, peace and joy? Are those around me comfortable at my side?

It is worth remembering that St. Louis was masterfully educated in the faith by his mother, Blanche of Castile, and wonderfully accompanied by his wife, Margaret of Provence, with whom he had 11 children.