

FAITH AND REASON

I give you a new Commandment- Love one another as I have loved you: Let's consider this great commandment by way of contrast: Philo (30 b.c-40 a.d.), the great Jewish philosopher from Alexandria said: "What is hateful to you, do not do to another". Socrates, the Greek orator said: "What things make you angry when you suffer them at the hands of others, do not do to others". The Stoics had as one of their basic rules: "What you do not wish to be done to yourself, do not do to another". Confucius, when asked, "Is there any word which may serve as a rule of practice for oneself, is not reciprocity such a word"? "What you do not want done to yourself do not do to others"

Do not... Do not... Do not... Do not... Do not... There is nothing particularly wrong with the words "do not". They have their place in human discourse. But they do not give us very much to live by as they are clearly negative: "do not". Some will object, and correctly, and say "Are not the Ten commandments negative?" Yes, indeed they are... but they are destined to be fulfilled and have come not to abolish the Law but to fulfill the Law. This is clearly evident in the Gospel. It is clearly evident in the Sermon on the Mount, in Ch 5-9 of St Mathew's Gospel.

The love Jesus asks of his followers, is a love that only God could ask of us. Such heroic love touches what is God-like in us, created as we are in God's image... and it makes us children of the Most High God. This did not go unnoticed by St Vincent de Paul who said something that is profoundly simple and also simply profound. ... "Be kind, be kind, and you will become a Saint." This text is not a call to be a pacifist, to offer no resistance to wrong-doing. Rather, it is that unforgiving, vindictive, vengeful attitude that is to be avoided. The text calls for an open and generous spirit that is not blind to the needs of others. The Golden Rule as it is called comes from Lk 6:27-38. "Do unto others as you would have them do to you".

Some people like to think they are as good as their neighbors. Other people like to think they are better than their neighbors. The concern of Jesus is, how much better we are than the ordinary person. It is not our neighbors with whom we must compare ourselves. Rather, it is to God himself who has shown us how he wants us to live. The point implicit in Sacred Scripture may be stated very simply: "I am asking you to live in this way, because I want you to be like me; then you be sons and daughters of your heavenly Father. Forget your earthly standards, I rebuked Peter for thinking the way he thinks, not as God thinks."

St Paul expresses this so beautifully in Romans 12:1-2: "Brothers, I beg you, through the mercy of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may judge what is God's will, what is good, pleasing, and perfect."

The world in which we live is going "from bad to worse": dishonesty, Injustice, cruelty, and immorality are spreading like a plague. And there seems to be no end in sight. At this point I think of the Missionary in Rwanda.

Think of what is taking place in Western democracies - as they are called. The slaughter of the innocents, the neglect of the poor, the elderly, the sick in large cities, in dictatorships. There can be no doubt, the world is in a state of decline, it is going downhill. What will save us? First, we must recognize that the power of darkness has, and is, corrupting the minds and hearts of people. Human nature itself could not be so blind, so reckless. Satan is winning campaigns without firing a shot. He has duped people into thinking that they are in charge of affairs, that they are determining the course of human affairs.

Is it possible to live the Gospel message in such a world... by human ability alone?..... No! for it is against the "powers of darkness" that we do battle. Only by the grace of God can win this war! The Film Director Jean Jacques Arnaud said that the film "Quest for Fire" fulfilled a life-long dream. The film celebrates the discovery of fire which took place 80,000 years ago, a discovery which saved the human race from extinction. An increasing number of people in the modern world, for a variety of reasons, fear that we are once again on the brink of extinction.... One thing alone can save us: the rediscovery of love. Not the anemic, selfish form of love that has the individual person as its center, which is nothing less than selfishness in the name of love. But love as revealed by Jesus - God incarnate! Will someone 80,000 years from now, make a film celebrating the re-discovery of love... which saved the world from extinction in the year 2030, 2070, 2090... **Fr. William C. Mooney**

Show Me the Way: Lord Jesus, I am young, and the world is opening up before me. There are many paths I can take; help me to choose the one that is right for me. In this world I see so much beauty and so much pain living side-by-side. The beauty thrills me, but the pain, the injustice, the abuse, the sadness disturbs me. So many people can lead only half-lives. I know you are calling me to live life to the full, but I do not see clearly the path you wish me to follow. Lead me gently there.

A Hidden Treasure, an Open Book: Lord, reveal to us the interior world of the soul, the hidden treasure within us, the Castle of God. Make the exterior world preserve the imprint of the Creator, and may it be an open book that speaks to us of God.

Ash Wednesday Prayer: Jesus, you place on my forehead the sign of my sister Death: "Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return." How not hear her wise advice? One day my life on earth will end; the limits on my years are set, though I know not the day or hour. Shall I be ready to go to meet you? Let this holy season be a time of grace for me and all this world. "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain wisdom of heart." O Jesus, you place on my forehead the sign of your saving Cross: "Turn from sin and be faithful to the gospel." How can I turn from sin unless I turn to you? You speak, you raise your hand, you touch my mind and call my name, "Turn to the Lord your God again." These days of your favor leave a blessing as you pass on me and all your people. Turn to us, Lord God, and we shall turn to you.

A Thought For the Day

Sunday Jesus I trust in you, even in the darkness, for you are there to give me comfort.

Monday Love never says: I have done enough!

Tuesday This is what people expect of us, that we live our faith.

Wednesday The more we empty ourselves, the more we give God the room to fill us.

Thursday His love for us led Christ to Gethsemane and to Calvary.

Friday If we really want to love, we must learn to forgive before anything else.

Saturday God has his own ways of working in the hearts of people, and we do not know how close he is to each of us.

The Meaning of Life: On this miniscule speck of galactic dust called Earth. Life abounds, thrives, laughs and sings. Tough battered by brutal, indifferent winds, and wave upon the merciless wave. It rises yet again, defying both fate and foe with the cry "I am". Look to the heavens! Pierce the depths of ocean and know! Listen to a billion miracles proclaim the Divine name "I am". And when the noise of war and wailing, all but drowns out prayers for peace. And calls for vengeance echo through the land, in some small corner of the globe. A newborn baby sleeps an unspoken truth ..." I am". Across infinite universes... Or perhaps none but ours... Frolic in the precious eternal now knowing you have the awesome power.... To see and hear and feel and respond: "I am".

God knows: God knows how it feels to cry like a baby and die like a criminal.

God knows how it feels to work with rough hands, on rougher wood.

And walk this earth with calloused feet. And taste the sweetness of precious food. Shared one last time with friends.

God knows a broken heart hurts more than a whip or cross or nails or crown.

God knows comfort in a mother's arms longing for a father's love, sadness at a brother's loss, strength of a sister's loyalty.

God knows why a heart overflowing with love erupts with anger, when people hurt one another.

God knows the joy of life restored when the dead arise and the lost are found.

God knows all this not by being alone but because a woman once said "yes", and God became one of us.

The Spirit of Adventure: And so, despite the emptiness, honor the void in tribute to what once was; Bless the pain, as proof it was real, and light a candle of prayer in the quiet chapel of your soul to dispel this hour's darkness. And only when you are ready, let go of even this. Do not be afraid. I shall live in your heart as you do in mine as we do in God's.

As for me, I go to my next adventure. Confident the smallest atom in the farthest galaxy obeys God's command, how can we, made of billions of atoms ever be forgotten? The One who fashioned us and breathed into us a living spirit, creates, comforts and called us still to rise higher and become more.

In His Will is Our Peace

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