

2014

- “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?”
- “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and all your soul, and with all your mind.”
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- When that scholar of the law asks the question, Jesus goes right to the heart of the matter: God first and foremost in all things!
- And then the second great commandment: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” ...not something new, but what they’ve had from the time of Moses, given in Leviticus 19:18.
- These two encompass the whole law and the prophets—the teaching of all scripture.
- And the Pharisees knew this. In Mark’s version of a similar (maybe the same?) event, a scribe affirms after Jesus’ answer: “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that he is one, and there is no other but he; and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” (Mark 12:32-33)
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- When Moses brought down the Ten Commandments from the top of Mt. Sinai, the first three dealt with the things of God:
 - I am the Lord thy God; you will have no other gods besides me.
 - You shall not take the Lord’s name in vain.
 - Keep holy the Sabbath day.
 - **OR:** *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength.*
- One the second tablet were the commandments concerning one’s fellow men:
 - You shall honor your father and mother.
 - You shall not kill, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness or covet.
 - **OR,** boiling it down: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*

2014

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- Now what is very often neglected is the order of these commandments: Love and adoration of God is by far the most essential...to take absolute precedence in our lives.
- Because, in the end, love of God is not “*only*” love of God, but of our neighbor as well; there is nothing we do for love of God that does not facilitate love of neighbor.
- For, as St. John tells us: “*God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.*”
- So...anything we do for the true good of our neighbor is a participation in the love which God IS...for He, AS love, is the source of all love.
- Therefore, the moral law which comes from God thus facilitates love of neighbor as well.
- After all, as Paul reminds us...does not God give us His Word in the scriptures entirely for our sake? Angels have no need of a book; the will of God is revealed to them directly.
- And, so, if scripture is inspired by God (which it is), then all of it is to instruct us...as St. Paul reminds us: “*All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*” (2Tim 3:16-17)
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- The point being: if God--who is love and the source of all good, inspires all scripture--then all scripture points the way to true love of Him and to our neighbor...and thus is for our good.
- And, furthering the point, the Gospel establishes the teaching authority of the Church, inspired by the Holy Spirit...by God.
- Therefore, can anything be good that goes against scripture and/or the teaching of God’s Church?
- So...if I believe these fundamental teachings, and still say “Yes; something can be good that goes against what God gives us”, then I embrace a contradiction—for to hold to such an opinion is to declare that there is something that is not good in God...and, in

fact, that I know better than God, and thus I become in a way God's god...which is absurd.

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- So...sincerity in faith first of all is wisdom...pursuing the love of God in prayer and worship—Sunday Mass, daily prayer...and the following of the moral law that He has given us through scripture and the Church.
- These are essential to the love of God...as St. John reminds us: *“This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome”*...for from our love of God—our love of love—does love of neighbor spring forth and become operative.
- And, secondly...love of God spills over into love of one another.
- What is love of neighbor? The seeking of his true good...that good which God outlines for us in scripture and Church teaching.
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- So...be “all in” for God, and not wishy-washy...vacillating... seeking to find some sort of “middle ground” between God and the world to the expense of the truths of our faith.
- As they say: To walk in the middle of the road is to risk getting hit from both sides.
- God desires our total devotion...not halfway. Would you be happy if your spouse loved you halfway, and someone else the other half? Then how love God and something that is not of God?
- We cannot expect the world to love us if we remain with Christ.
- Jesus Himself warns us when He prays to the Father: *“I have given them thy word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”* (Joh 17:14 RSV)
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- Why go through all of this?
- To drive home the fact that to seek God is to seek true Good, and to depart from God is to depart from Good; there is no other path.

- David in the Psalms excoriates the double-minded man: *“I hate double-minded men, but I love thy law...Depart from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commandments of my God.”* (Psa 119:113-115 RSV)
- Then St. James: *“...[a] person must not suppose that a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways, will receive anything from the Lord.”* (Jam 1:7-8 RSV)
- The prophet Elijah: *“Elijah came near to all the people, and said, ‘How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal [the world], then follow him.’”* (1Ki 18:21 RSV)
- And, of course, Jesus in the book of Revelation to the tepid church of Laodicea: *“... you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth...”* (Rev 3:15-18 RSV)
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- So...we must determine within ourselves the ultimate wisdom of fidelity to God, and resolve to be so...not being swayed by the cultural flavor of the day, or even our own fickle likes and dislikes and opinions...so easily swayed by culture and the promise of popularity or accolades from the world.
- To whom better to cede our world-influenced opinions than God and His Church? In fact, doesn't our faith in the divinity even demand such?
- So, when making a choice—whether in our day-to-day lives, in elections, in our choice for self or for the other person--in whatever we do--to follow the teaching of God is to follow what is good and right...and to advance His teaching and devotion to Him is what is truly for the good of society and for every person.
- That is love of God. That is love of neighbor.
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- So...to paraphrase once again those words of Joshua to God's people at that decision point of entering the Promised Land: “...

*Choose this day whom you will serve, and serve whom you will.
But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord!”*

Reading I

[Ex 22:20-26](#)

Thus says the LORD:

"You shall not molest or oppress an alien,
for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt.

You shall not wrong any widow or orphan.

If ever you wrong them and they cry out to me,

I will surely hear their cry.

My wrath will flare up, and I will kill you with the sword;
then your own wives will be widows, and your children orphans.

"If you lend money to one of your poor neighbors among my people,
you shall not act like an extortioner toward him

by demanding interest from him.

If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge,

you shall return it to him before sunset;

for this cloak of his is the only covering he has for his body.

What else has he to sleep in?

If he cries out to me, I will hear him; for I am compassionate."

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 18:2-3, 3-4, 47, 51](#)

R. (2) I love you, Lord, my strength.

I love you, O LORD, my strength,

O LORD, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer.

R. I love you, Lord, my strength.

My God, my rock of refuge,

my shield, the horn of my salvation, my stronghold!

Praised be the LORD, I exclaim,

and I am safe from my enemies.

R. I love you, Lord, my strength.

The LORD lives and blessed be my rock!

Extolled be God my savior.

You who gave great victories to your king

and showed kindness to your anointed.

R. I love you, Lord, my strength.

Reading II

[1 Thes 1:5c-10](#)

Brothers and sisters:

You know what sort of people we were among you for your sake.

And you became imitators of us and of the Lord,
receiving the word in great affliction, with joy from the Holy Spirit,
so that you became a model for all the believers
in Macedonia and in Achaia.

For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth
not only in Macedonia and in Achaia,
but in every place your faith in God has gone forth,
so that we have no need to say anything.

For they themselves openly declare about us
what sort of reception we had among you,
and how you turned to God from idols
to serve the living and true God
and to await his Son from heaven,
whom he raised from the dead,
Jesus, who delivers us from the coming wrath.

Gospel

[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."