

- It's of prime importance how this passage is phrased.
- When asked, Jesus declares the first and ultimate commandment to be: "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.*"
Numero uno. Siempre and always.
- But then, unbidden, He adds: "*The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'*"...from Leviticus—the main exposition of the Jewish Law: "*You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge...but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.*" (Lev 19:18)...indicating how closely linked are these two great commandments.
- And so we see once again how charity—and much of Christ's teaching—was not new, but a re-exposition of the Law...reiterated, reinforced and even expanded by Jesus...by His divine authority and command...but most of all due to His love of all persons.
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- Spouses, parents, children...friends, lands, blessings...and our eternal salvation and eternal happiness—all come from God the Father, and it is foolish to love ANY gift more than the giver.
- Jesus echoes this when He proclaims: "*He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me...*" (Matthew 10:37)...because He loves you infinitely more than even does your father or mother, son or daughter.
- The love of someone towards us, or of ourselves toward another, is a participation of the love that God has for all.
- He is the spring from which all love flows...and even your deepest love is merely a faint reflection of God's love for you.
- If we ever doubt that, we need only contemplate the cross—by far the greatest act of love in all time—past, present and future—because being of the infinite divinity, it is an act of infinite love.
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- Parents—with God's aid—give physical life...but God gives spiritual life here, and eternal life to His faithful. He is the parent of our souls.

- Thus, how can we NOT think of one another—of each person—as brother and sister—with souls born of the one and only source.
- And, as God tells us through the prophet Isaiah: “*Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you.*” (Isaiah 49:15 NAB)
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- How many of you parents have paid debts for your children? Why? Because you love them and don’t want them to suffer the harsh consequences for what often was foolishness. So you give of yourself to save them.
- This is what Jesus has done for us: paid the infinite debt of justice we owe to God for sin and ingratitude because of His love for us... paying the price for our sins with His own life upon the cross.
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- But obedience to His word and will is essential, as Jesus Himself warns: “*Not everyone who [simply] says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father...*” (Matthew 7:21)...God’s holy will, which is nothing else but the good and the most beneficial to all.
- When we do the good, we do the “God-ly”...by definition...and without God, we are without good...as Jesus Himself declares: “*I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*” (John 15:5)
- And yet...by God’s grace, even those who do not yet believe in God or Jesus can do good, especially in following that second commandment of loving neighbor.
- But we who are blessed with the grasp of Christ’s call have an even greater obligation to follow faithful His will in all things...an obligation to good itself.

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- And thus: “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*”
 - While the world flounders frantically seeking happiness in empty things—worshipping the world’s idols of sex, money, pride

sensual pleasures, and yet finding no happiness—the Christian finds true and very real happiness in God the Father through Jesus Christ.

- That’s why it is SO important to attend Mass at least every Sunday. Not only because of the Commandment to keep holy the Lord’s day, but also because here in the Church we tear ourselves away from the hypnotic and distracting effects of the world and remind ourselves what is really true and good...strengthened by the grace that comes from the sacraments.
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- Here we are reminded that, “Yes, I am a child of God, made in His image. I will renew my love for Him and my determination to be worthy of the Heavenly family...just as the saints—my brothers and sisters—struggled before me.”
- People who let loose the world and seek God before all earthly things are not disappointed.
- It’s sort of like parachuting. We are fearful at first, but the exhilaration of making that “leap of faith” makes it all worthwhile. And the Lord is the ‘chute the always opens.
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- So let us remember the book of Revelation, speaking of the Heavenly Jerusalem which the saints whom we celebrated the other day already enjoy: “...*the Lamb...will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*” (Revelation 7:16-17)
- We are the family of God...the Body of Christ...and so let’s live every day loving God and loving our neighbor, knowing that, whatever happens to us otherwise, we are beloved of our Heavenly Father.
- As we read in the prophet Jeremiah: “*Stand beside the earliest roads, ask the pathways of old. Which is the way to good, and walk it; thus you will find rest for your souls.*” (6:16)

Reading 1 Dt 6:2-6

Moses spoke to the people, saying:

"Fear the LORD, your God,
and keep, throughout the days of your lives,
all his statutes and commandments which I enjoin on you,
and thus have long life.

Hear then, Israel, and be careful to observe them,
that you may grow and prosper the more,
in keeping with the promise of the LORD, the God of your fathers,
to give you a land flowing with milk and honey.

"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone!

Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God,
with all your heart,
and with all your soul,
and with all your strength.

Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you today."

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 2 Heb 7:23-28

Brothers and sisters:

The levitical priests were many
because they were prevented by death from remaining in office,
but Jesus, because he remains forever,
has a priesthood that does not pass away.

Therefore, he is always able to save those who approach God through him,
since he lives forever to make intercession for them.

It was fitting that we should have such a high priest:
holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners,
higher than the heavens.
He has no need, as did the high priests,
to offer sacrifice day after day,
first for his own sins and then for those of the people;
he did that once for all when he offered himself.
For the law appoints men subject to weakness to be high priests,
but the word of the oath, which was taken after the law,
appoints a son,
who has been made perfect forever.

Gospel Mk 12:28b-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.