

XXX ordinary Sunday Cycle A
October 25, 2020
“Love God, your neighbor, and yourself”

During Jesus' time, there were 613 commandments in the Jewish Law. Of these, 248 were positive instructions (what a person should do) and 365 were negative instructions (what a person shouldn't do). It was not always possible to observe so many commands in daily life, so the rabbis often discussed ways in which these 613 commandments could be prioritized.

Some rabbis, who were the leaders and teachers in the community, ranked some commands as carrying more weight than others, for example, how a person honors his parents as more important than observing the rules governing the treatment of birds' nests (Deuteronomy 22:6–7).

Others used summary statements written by scholars of the law to organize the 613 commandments, for example, Hillel, the renowned rabbi, taught, “What is hateful to you do not do to your neighbor; that is the whole Torah while the rest is commentary; go and learn from it.”

In today's Gospel, we hear a lawyer asking Jesus to give his opinion on which is the “greatest” commandment. Jesus replies, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Of course, we have heard this simple answer many times, yet it continues to challenge us every day.

Every action of our Christian lives must be motivated and directed by both love of God and love of neighbor. If we fail in one, then we fail in both because they are intrinsically connected as is clearly written by Saint John: “Whoever claims to love God yet hates his brother is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen” (John 4:20). That said, let Jesus show us what loving God and neighbor looks like.

Jesus' words and actions show he loves his neighbor. During his earthly existence, Jesus loved those who followed Him as well as those who wouldn't follow Him. Jesus loved those who washed His feet with their tears and those who drove the nails in His hands. Jesus loved the religious leaders who rejected Him and the sinners who came to Him. Jesus healed the sick, taught the ignorant, fed the multitude, raised the dead, left us His Body and Blood, and reopened the gates of paradise to all who love him.

Jesus shows us the interconnectedness of loving God and loving neighbor and his example challenges us to do the same.

With this in mind, we might ask ourselves, How does the lived example of Jesus challenge us in our understanding of what it means to love God and Neighbor? What

loving action of Jesus would we find most difficult to live out in our lives? How can we as a faith community help people want to love God more as Jesus did? How can we help people love their neighbors more as Jesus did?

Finally, since we are called to love our neighbor as ourselves it might be helpful to ask how we can be more loving to ourselves.

How do we treat our bodies? Do we eat a lot of 'junk food' and drink too much alcohol? Or do we eat healthy food and drink enough water each day? Do we exercise most days and get sufficient sleep each night? Or do we stay up too late playing video games? Do we read good books and study articles that make us smarter? Or do we waste a lot of time looking at television shows that are not good for us? Do we have healthy hobbies, for example, learning a musical instrument, playing a sport, or studying a different language? While 'surfing the internet', do we go to websites that are negative and sinful, or do we go to those that will teach us positive and pure? Finally, do we take a few moments each to pray to God? Do we regularly go to Church? Do we support the Church with our finances and make contributions to other charitable organizations?

Jesus reminds us that the two most important commandments are to love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and all your mind and to love your neighbor as yourself." As we grow in love, we will experience better personal health and more happiness in our families, and a closer relationship with God and our community.