



Bringing Home the Word

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time | October 29, 2017

Loving God and Neighbor

By Mary Katharine Deeley

Quickly, name the greatest law of the United States. I think all of us would have to think about that. Some might name a precept like: "All men are created equal." Others might talk about the Bill of Rights. But when it comes to the laws that embody these precepts, we might point to any number of them and disagree about which is the greatest.

Jesus has no such problem. When the Pharisees try to test him with a similar question about Jewish law, Jesus responds with the great commandment from Deuteronomy (6:4) and pairs it with a law found in Leviticus (19:18).

The Pharisees knew both laws, but the first had been emphasized throughout Israelite tradition. The Jews were commanded to teach it to their children and to bind the words to their foreheads and wrists. The second, though, was one of a series of laws, seemingly no more or less important than the ones that surrounded it.

When Jesus lifted up the two of them, he made it very clear that our first love is always for God, to whom we give our entire being. Jesus is equally clear, though, that we cannot stop there. We must also love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

Indeed, our relationship with God and our relationship with one another are bound together. When one is broken, so is the other. When one flourishes, so does the other. Loving God and neighbor draws us together as Church to praise and worship God and to reach out to the world.

Let us obey both these commandments with equal joy. †

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A Word From Pope Francis

Jesus did not say: "One of you go," but "All of you go": we are sent together. Dear young friends, be aware of the companionship of the whole Church and also the communion of the saints on this mission....Jesus did not call the Apostles to live in isolation, he called them to form a group, a community.

—Homily at World Youth Day, July 28, 2013



Sunday Readings

Exodus 22:20-26

You shall not oppress or afflict a resident alien, for you were once aliens.

1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10

For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth.

Matthew 22:34-40

[Jesus said,] "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- What next thing is Jesus asking for as you strive toward giving him your all?
- There is joy that comes from giving our all. Do I experience that joy?



Answering the Question Why We Believe in God

By Phyllis Zagano

If a friend asked you why he or she should believe in God, how would you answer? Catholics have a common understanding of what it means to speak of God. But in our pluralistic society where different religions meet every day, just what people mean by God is unclear. Christians, Muslims, and Jews all believe in a single God but think about him differently.

When agnostics say they don't know about God, it is the God of these great Western religions they profess ignorance of. The same is true of atheists, who do not believe in one supreme being who created the world and sustains its existence.

For most, either you believe you are in charge—or not. If you believe you are not in charge but that the cosmos is ordered by a supreme intelligence and not by chaotic chance, then you likely believe in God.

Why is that? A French philosopher named Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) presented an interesting wager. He said we all either bet there is a God or that there is not. The possible results of Pascal's wager really argue for belief in God.

If we bet that there is a God and there is not, then we effectively lose nothing. However, if we bet that there is not a God and there is a God, then we lose everything. And if we bet that there is a God and there truly is a God, then we win everything. This is a coldly rational way of looking at God, but for many

it is a way to start thinking about his existence.

Limits of Human Reason

Even so, we cannot really know much about God. That is because our intellects are limited and if God is God, then he is without limits. Our minds are unable to surround the enormity and complexity of God.

Before Pascal, many great thinkers such as St. Anselm (1033-1109), St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), and René Descartes (1596-1650) presented proofs for God's existence. Even today, philosophers argue the point. But arguments and counterarguments about the existence of God are limited by the confines of human reason. In the end, whether we are a brilliant philosopher or the simplest child, the Church teaches that everyone can know and love God.

How can that be? To begin with, Christianity teaches that God came into history as Jesus Christ. The mission of Jesus was to teach us about the Father, who loved Jesus—and us—into being. The fact of that love is understood in the person of the Holy Spirit. This is how we understand God as the Trinity. In

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the Church's earliest years, Christians hammered out the definition of God that remains today and which forms the first words of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary..."

Unique Evidence

Even so, after millions of people have professed the Apostles' Creed, and after brilliant philosophers have "proved" God's existence, why should we believe?

The question is best understood in the negative. How can anyone see a sunrise or a baby and not believe in God? How can anyone watch a flower grow or see a wave upon the shore and not believe in God? How can anyone who has seen reflected in his or her own heart, the bright star in the east that continues to shine throughout eternity, not believe in God? †



Lord, I am grateful your commandments to love are simple and to the point. Keep my focus on loving you. Stretch my heart to love my neighbor, too.

From Grateful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time by Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 30–
November 4

Mon. Weekday:
Rom 8:12–17 / Lk 13:10–17


Tue. Weekday:
Rom 8:18–25 / Lk 13:18–21

Wed. All Saints' Day: Rv 7:2–4, 9–14 /
1 Jn 3:1–3 / Mt 5:1–12a

Thu. All Souls' Day: Wis 3:1–9 /
Rom 5:5–11 or Rom 6:3–9 / Jn 6:37–40

Fri. Weekday:
Rom 9:1–5 / Lk 14:1–6

Sat. St. Charles Borromeo:
Rom 11:1–2a, 11–12, 25–29. / Lk 14:1, 7–11

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