

RCIA Newsletter *Keeping in touch.*

No.7

7th May 2020

Dear Friends,

Following on last week's consideration of what the moral law is based on, this week John Kimberley considers what that moral law looks like in practice - by reflecting on the Ten Commandments. Nick Harden then ponders on a lovely passage in St John's Gospel taken from the Last Supper when Jesus confides in his Apostles - preparing them for discipleship. We are included in this discourse. Our relationship with Jesus is that of friends - St Thomas Aquinas points out that 'friend' equates with equality. By nature we creatures cannot be the equal of God but by inviting us to friendship Jesus points the way to our re-birth in Baptism and sharing the divine life, a truly amazing privilege.

Please remember to look at the parish website for a wonderful selection of ideas for spiritual growth. Let us also all remember each other at the live-streaming of Mass on Sunday at 9.15am.

God bless

John de Waal

The Ten Commandments

John Kimberley

“I shall take you as my people and I shall be your God. And you will know that I am Yahweh your God, who has freed you from the forced labour of the Egyptians.” (Exodus 6 : 7)

The Ten Commandments are in many ways the bedrock of the relationship between God and His Chosen People, they are always there and fundamental to what is read throughout the Bible, engrained in the Jewish national life. It is almost as if God said through Moses :

“You shall be my people, but you will have to understand that this carries a great responsibility; you will have to live in ways which will mark you out as being different from everyone else, and by doing this you will reveal to others that you know me.”

In broad terms the Ten Commandments lay out the basic standards of how God wishes His people to behave.

In Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 we can read the accounts of the imparting of the Commandments to the people, and both accounts agree broadly with each other. Biblical scholarship has been most active in studying them, but the purpose of these notes is not to present a summary of this, but rather to look briefly at the meaning and importance of the Commandments and how they continue to offer the standard we are called to follow. In following them we reveal to others how seriously we view our relationship with God, and how our knowledge of Him informs our lives and the way we choose to live.

Moses was given the Commandments in dramatic circumstances and relayed them to the people. In a shortened form, (apologies if too shortened), we hear :

You shall have no other gods but me - there is only one God.

You shall not make idols - nowadays we tend not to have individual idols to worship, but we are all quite good at finding other pursuits which consume our energy and take the place of the one God.

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain - a call to wholehearted following. To misquote a prayer : 'what we say with our lips must show what we believe in our hearts.'

Keep the Sabbath Day holy and set apart for God - faith is to be taken seriously and we must plan for it to be a regular part of our lives. (At the time of writing COVID - 19 has a lot to answer for!!)

Honour your father and mother - family life and family love are important.

You shall not murder - human life is precious and a gift given by God in creation. No one has the right to end another's life for any reason.

You shall not commit adultery - aside from obvious sexual meaning, this can also be seen as an unwavering commitment required in the conduct of human relationships.

You shall not steal - respect others and do not take from them what is rightfully theirs.

You shall not give false witness - honesty, integrity of character, a consistent witness to the truth are required at all times, and it is not acceptable to malign other human beings.

You shall not covet - this is not say that we should always be happy with our lot, but that God has a plan for each one of us, and we should be aware that the 'green-eyed god' of jealousy, together with the resentment that flows from it, is not conducive to living a life totally with God.

If we were now to have our discussion groups there is ample material in these to furnish an evening of sharing in discussion/debate, but I will highlight two matters to focus on.

First, for the Christian, is the absolute importance of the Ten Commandments in the expression of social life in whatever generation or society. In the prayers of the Church we often hear the phrase 'the Common Good', and I would suggest that there would be no 'Common Good' without some kind of adherence to the basic principles revealed in the Ten Commandments.

Secondly, we all have the gift of a conscience, a conscience which has been informed that there is an objective right and an objective wrong, and that not everything is relative. It is the Ten Commandments which open up for us the

perspective of the divine insight into some of the moral and ethical questions which affect our behaviour and our being. It is right that we question, but it is also right that we know that there is a bottom line, one we glimpse in the promise, 'I shall take you as my people, and I will be your God.'

To finish, I will move to the New Testament and Our Lord's teaching, and how He shortened ten commandments to just two, and in the two encompasses the whole length and breadth of what is involved in our relationship with God :

"When the pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they got together and put him to the test, one of them put a further question, 'Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?'

Jesus said to him, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment.

The second resembles it, you must love your neighbour as yourself.

On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the prophets too."

(Matthew 22 : 34 - 40; but also see Mark 12 : 28 - 31, Luke 10 : 25 - 28 and John : 13 : 34 - 35)

Lectio using Jn 15:9-17.

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ No

longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. ¹⁷ This I command you, to love one another.

Reflection on Jn 15:9-17.

This passage comes at the centre of Jesus' farewell discourse in the Gospel of John. The disciples are being prepared for their future vocation. To follow Jesus involves two aspects:

1. Abiding in Him
2. Loving one another

We abide in the love of Jesus by keeping His commandments, 'making our home in Him and allowing Him to make His home in us'. It is a friendship that gives life and involves a level of intimacy or *into-me-you-see* as a friend once stated. Jesus waits patiently for us to open the door of our hearts and let Him in.

Just as the Father loves the Son and Jesus loves the disciples (and us) so Jesus commands His disciples (and us) to become part of the unity, the oneness, by abiding in His love. It is through our love that we show for each other that we participate in the life of the Trinity. It is helpful to consider Saint Augustine's analogy of the Trinity: the Father as the Lover, the Son as the Beloved and the Holy Spirit as the Love.



The result of this love of others is the experience of joy that we read about in verse 11, being fully alive. There is no greater joy than to realise that we are precious and loved by God and to share that love with others. Jesus left us an example of what this love looks like, The Good Shepherd who “lays down his life for the sheep” (Jn 10:11). His death on the cross manifests the divine love for humanity.

The command “to love one another” (Jn 15:17) is a responsibility that comes from the reality that, “You did not choose me, but I chose you” (Jn 15:16). We have each been ‘chosen’, ‘called’ to ‘love one another’, it is our Christian vocation.

I think that Saint John Henry Newman articulated this vocation perfectly in his ‘Fragrance Prayer’:

*Dear Jesus, help me to spread Your fragrance everywhere I go.
Flood my soul with Your spirit and life.
Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly,
That my life may only be a radiance of Yours.*

*Shine through me, and be so in me
That every soul I come in contact with
May feel Your presence in my soul.
Let them look up and see no longer me, but only Jesus!*

*Stay with me and then I shall begin to shine as You shine,
So to shine as to be a light to others;
The light, O Jesus will be all from You; none of it will be mine;
It will be you, shining on others through me.*

*Let me thus praise You the way You love best, by shining on those around
me.*

*Let me preach You without preaching, not by words but by my example,
By the catching force of the sympathetic influence of what I do,
The evident fullness of the love my heart bears to You.*

A final thought : When it comes to giving some people stop at nothing.