

Saint Thomas' and Saint Thomas' of the Air Church
 Trinity XVIII
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When Jesus answered the Lawyer's question of today's Gospel, He gave us

The doctrine that forms the basis
 for all Christian theology and thought

The question was

“which is the great commandment in the law?”

His answer was of such magnitude and power that it has initiated
 The Mass for almost 500 years:

“Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God
 with all they heart
 with all they soul
 and with all they mind.

This is the first and great commandment
 And the second is like unto it
 Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy self”.

Key word for today and the Gospel story is: Love

Father Martin Dale an English Anglican priest tells this story:

He was serving in Switzerland

during the

Muslim exodus to Europe of a few years ago.

On Saturdays he and his wife entered the refugee camp

and invited one and all to attend church the next day.

On Sunday they would drive to the camp

and pick up all the people who wished to join in the service.

There were usually more Muslims than Christians in the church.

One Sunday a young man named Mustafa rose and announced:
“I have become a Christian because you have shown me love.
In Islam, there is no love”.

You see, the doctrine that sets Christianity apart
from some of the world’s Great religions
is love.

Jesus focused us on it
when he answered the lawyer’s question.
He took the law as described
in Deuteronomy (6: 4-5)
and in Leviticus (19:18)
and He combined them for the first time
And gave us the summary
the spirit
And the heart of the 10 commandments.

Jesus opened our eyes
and what he showed us is the role of Christian Love in our lives.

It had been there all along.
From the first book of scripture, the very beginning:
Genesis Speaks of Love;
That God in His love
Created mankind.

Notice that before there was Life there was love
You see; Love precedes life.

It is the love of God that gave us life in creation.
It is the love of God that seeks us out
And offers us salvation

Through faith in Christ Jesus.

When there was no other way for us to be reconciled to God,
 Jesus overcame hatred
 and evil
 and even death,
 Through His sacrificial act
 Of ultimate love
 On the cross.

In his first Epistle St John wrote (1 John 4:7):
 “Beloved, let us love one another
 For love is of God
 And every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God
 He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love.
 In this was manifested the love of God toward us
 Because that God sent His only begotten Son
 Into the world
 that we might live through Him.
 Herein is love,
 Not that we loved God,
 But that He loved us
 And sent His Son to be the propitiation of our sins
 Beloved, if God so loved us,
 We ought to love one another.
 If we love one another God dwelleth in us
 And His love is made complete in us.”

Jesus tells us in today’s Gospel that the love with which God created
 mankind and

The love that came to us from God at our creation

The love that God has for us in such abundance
 The love that sacrificed His only Son on the cross
 We are to return to Him.
 With all our hearts, all our souls and all our minds.
 That is how we comply with the first and great commandment.

As Saint Paul put it so succinctly:

“Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law”
 May I remind that Christian love is not to be confused with romantic
 love. It is more akin to a verb than a noun. It is something we do as
 much as something we feel.

The amount of time we spend with God
 Being in His presence
 Speaking with Him in prayer
 Is a reflection of how much we love him.
 The amount of time we spend reading His inspired Word
 Is a reflection of how much we love Him.
 The amount of time we spend in communion with Him;
 That close union with Him in the Eucharist
 The amount of time we spend doing His will in our lives.
 Is a reflection of how much we love Him.

A Christian life yearns to be in the presence of our Heavenly Father.

We can think of it as a vertical transmission of love from God above to
 us and from us below back to God.

In His answer to “which is the great commandment?”
 Jesus points us to the second love commandment
 a horizontal transmission of the love of God
 to our neighbor.

Horizontal in the sense of the love shared among the people of God.

Having received and perfected the love of God in our lives
We cannot help but give it away to others.

When we consider His words in context
We see
That the principal Jesus gave us
Is radically new and wonderfully refreshing.

In its essence, Jesus declared
That when we love God the way we ought to love God
That when we love others the way we ought to love others.
That when we do that,
 We will find a peace and a love for self
 That passes all understanding.
Sometimes we need to be reminded how important
That all-giving love is.
Not only to those who receive it
But to those who give it.

A wise man once said: We are not living
If we are not loving.

We've said that Jesus describes two dimensions in His answer to the
lawyer's question.
The one is vertical
 To love God
And the other is horizontal
 To love our neighbor
Together what to these two dimensions form?
A cross.

Come to think of it. Wasn't that the reason Christ died on the Cross?
To reconcile us with the Father
And so we could then be reconciled to one another too?

In her devotional booklet "The Upper Room" Sandra Palmer Carr recalls an evening with her little boy.

They were rocking in a high backed rocker with little Boyd on her lap. Boyd was looking up at his mom as they gently rocked back and forth. And suddenly he lifted his little head and stared straight at his mother and became very still.

He cupped her face in his little hands and whispered
Mommy I am in your eyes.

He had seen his own reflection in her eyes. It was a startling discovery for him.

She stopped rocking and held Boyd in that same position
For several long moments.

And then she said,

And you are in my eyes too.

Then he leaned his head against her contentedly and she resumed rocking.

Over the next several days, Boyd would check to see if his discovery was still true.

As he reached up to take her face he would ask "Am I still in your eyes Mommy?"

In the uncertain times of our lives

it is comforting to know

that we are still

in our heavenly Father's eyes.

Opening our eyes to others means

That we still have them in our eyes.

We Christians need to yield to the Holy Spirit

And allow God
To enable us to become better
At loving.
Allowing God's love to flow through us to others
Involves change
It involves risk.

But it will bring a tidal wave of joy
That washes and cleanses our souls
Even in the most difficult moments of life.

It is said that God's love sets off a divine chain reaction:
God's love is the spark
That kindles the fire of compassion.
Compassion is the fire
that lights the candle of service.
Service is the candle
that ignites the torch of Hope
Hope is the torch
that ignites the beacon of Faith
Faith is the beacon
that reflects the power of God.
And God is the One
Who creates
The miracle
Of love.

O Holy Spirit
May each of us be on fire with a passion
A passion to love the Lord our God
With all our hearts
With all our souls

And with all our minds
And love our neighbors as ourselves.

We shall love.
For we are not living
If we are not loving.