

Saint Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church
Trinity XVIII
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rmcneely+

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”.

The Key word for today and for the Gospel story 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 very beginning
and From the first book of scripture:
 Genesis Speaks of Love;
 That God in His love
 Created mankind.
 And it is Love that remains when this life ends.

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

It is the love of God that gave us life at 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.
We complete the circle and return the love to God.

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

Is a reflection of our love for 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
the 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 and is beyond 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.