

Read

Deuteronomy 6:2-6

Psalms 18:2-3a, 3b-4, 47, 51

Hebrews 7:23-28

Mark 12:28b-34

Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 3, 2024



REFLECTION

When we hear the word *commandments*, we might immediately think of the Ten Commandments that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai. However, Jewish teaching traditionally holds that there are 613 different commandments in the Torah, all of which help guide Jewish life. So when the scribe asked which was the most important, it was a pretty fair question. The answer that Jesus provides—to love God and neighbor—is clearly aligned with the essence of the laws (the scribe agrees with Jesus) and continues to refocus our efforts today. Everything we do in faith, every rule we have, every prayer we pray, every everything is about loving God and neighbor.

Even the Ten Commandments illustrate this two-part answer. The first three are about fully and completely loving God and the other seven are about practicing love of neighbor. Our care and concern for the well-being of others reflects the attitude of love and mercy that Jesus exemplified in his ministry. Jesus tells us that whatever we do to those most in need, we do to God. We show our love for God in how we treat others.



ACTION

This week, be intentional about loving God and others. Look for opportunities to do acts of kindness and go out of your way to be helpful. Whether you serve people in need through volunteering at an organization or you focus your efforts within your daily routine, make a commitment to show your love for God and others through your actions and your words. At the end of each day, spend time in prayer for those you served and thank God for the opportunity to share his love with others.



“Love God Love People”—Danny Gokey, ft. Michael W. Smith

<https://youtu.be/t-29WLQ3trA>



QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today’s readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How do you show the people in your life that you love them?
How do you show God?
- ❖ Is it easy or difficult for you to tell others that you love them? How about God?



November 3, 2024

THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #152B

Deuteronomy 6:2-6

Psalms 18:2-3a, 3b-4, 47, 51

Hebrews 7:23-28

Mark 12:28b-34

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

Rather than being a trap, the scribe's question to Jesus in today's Gospel reading seems to be a genuine question from someone who is seeking to better understand God. The scribe asks which is the most important commandment. Of the 613 laws that Jewish teaching traditionally holds, Jesus connects loving God and loving one's neighbor together as the summation of the law. The scribe agrees and Jesus recognizes in him a person who is seeking the kingdom of God. This answer teaches us as well. When we prioritize our love of God with prayer and service, tangible expressions of that love, we too experience the nearness of God's kingdom.

FOCUS: Our love of God is expressed in prayer and service.

Liturgical Calendar Connection

On November 4, the Church honors St. Charles Borromeo. This sixteenth-century archbishop of Milan played an important role in the Council of Trent. He helped the council continue its work of refining Catholic teaching in light of the Protestant reformation. He continued this work of reform in his own diocese, both among the clergy and among the laity. He also ministered to the physical needs of those in his diocese, especially during the plague of 1576. Though he had many family connections,

he lived a life of simplicity in order to be a better witness of Christ's life.

Church Teaching Connection

"Love of neighbour is thus shown to be possible in the way proclaimed by the Bible, by Jesus. It consists in the very fact that, in God and with God, I love even the person whom I do not like or even know. This can only take place on the basis of an intimate encounter with God, an encounter which has become a communion of will, even affecting my feelings. Then I learn to look on this other person not simply with my eyes and my feelings, but from the perspective of Jesus Christ. His friend is my friend" (Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 18).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Mark 12:28b-34

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

One of the scribes came to Jesus and asked him, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" Jesus replied, "The first is this: *Hear, O Israel! / The Lord our God is Lord alone! / You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.* The second is this: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.* There is no other

commandment greater than these." The scribe said to him, "Well said, teacher. You are right in saying, 'He is One and there is no other than he.' And 'to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself' is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." And when Jesus saw that he answered with understanding, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

► What do you think is the most important rule to follow?

Rules reveal a value we may have. Being on time shows that we respect the value of another person's time. Obeying traffic laws, like stopping at a traffic light, demonstrates our value of safety. Treating others with kindness indicates that the feelings of other people matter.

In today's Gospel, we hear a well-intentioned religious leader ask Jesus what he thought the greatest commandment was. In response, Jesus said to love God with your entire being, your heart, your soul, your mind, and your strength. Love is at the heart of who God is. As such, it is at the heart of our Catholic faith. Loving God is the foundation on which we build our lives.

A famous Jesuit prayer, sometimes entitled "Falling in Love," is about the way falling in love with God influences every aspect of our lives. The prayer describes how being in love determines everything: it becomes the reason a person gets up in the morning, it fills his or her heart with joy, it inspires a person's actions. What a person loves can also

break his or her heart. When people love God, they are filled with God's very presence. They love the same things God does and then they work to love others in the same way that God does.

► What are some ways that you can love God?

To love God is put God first in your life. It places a priority on a relationship with God and shows that he matters more than anything else in your life. You love others because you love God. It might be that a person does not hate God but allows God to become one thing among many other things. His or her life becomes so crowded with other "most important things" that God isn't at the center. God can even become crowded out by the many other good things in life. To avoid this, we must remember to prioritize our relationship with God, so that everything comes back into focus.

Prayer is an important part of falling in love with and staying in love with the Lord. It is a personal connection with Jesus, but it is also something that we share in together as a community of faith whenever we pray with others or go to Mass. In prayer, we lift our voices to God and God's voice is heard, even in stillness and silence. Through prayer, comfort, peace, and reassurance can be found. Participating in the Church's sacramental life is also prayer. When we experience the tangible signs of our faith that Jesus left us, we encounter his presence in the here and now. For example, receiving the Eucharist can be a profound and meaningful encounter with God. But even just spending time with God, not doing or saying anything, just being with God, is also a true expression of our love for him and his love for us.

► What are some of your favorite ways to pray?

Putting our prayer and love into action is service. Jesus did not simply say that we only ought to love God. He also said that we must love our neighbors as ourselves. In that, we are not loving one thing, but three. We love God, we love our neighbor, and we love ourselves. In each, we discover a new dimension of love and service. Caring for our neighbor is a concrete expression of God's incredible love. It is through serving our neighbor that we also love God who dwells within them. When we act as Jesus did, we become witnesses to the truth of God's love for those we serve.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the “Church Teaching Connection” on page 62.

We are called to love God, and because of that love, to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Loving God means prioritizing that relationship and supporting it through prayer.

Service to our neighbor is the expression of our love for God.

Act on the Word

Teen Commandments

For this activity, you will need paper and pens.

The goal of this activity is to reflect on rules that teens feel are important and necessary for a happy and fruitful life. The rules will be developed by the teens themselves and reflect their current concerns in life.

Begin by reviewing the Ten Commandments with the group. These commandments were rules given to the Israelites by God to help them live within his covenant. The commandments helped form their identity and oriented them toward loving God and one another. It helped them to stay in right relationship with God and with one another. As a faithful Jew, Jesus knew these commandments and in today’s Gospel, we hear him summarize the most important principle underlying all of them: love God and love your neighbor.

Share with the teens that during this activity they will create a new set of ten important rules for teens living in today’s world, called the “Teen Commandments.” These rules should reflect their most important values and address the greatest

issues that they are facing. They should be rules that help teens live full and happy lives.

Break into pairs or small groups and give the groups paper and pens. Let the groups know that they should create rules that address their home life, their school life, and their spiritual life, but that they can also create other rules that might fall outside of these categories. There is no maximum number of rules they should write, and they do not have to get to ten if they don’t feel it is necessary.

After the groups have had some time to brainstorm, discuss, and write down their “Teen Commandments,” have each group share its list with the larger group. Afterward, have a large group discussion that reflects on this process and the content of the new commandments. Some questions that might help guide the discussion include asking about what the process of writing the commandments was like, how each group came to agree upon what was important, and what kinds of similarities and differences existed between what each group wrote.

Closing Prayer

*Infinite Love,
your incomprehensible love brought us to
life and sustains us.*

*May we never take this love for granted,
but respond appropriately
with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.*

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday’s Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.