

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time



The Ten Commandments, as well as hundreds of other Jewish laws, were well-known by the rulers of Jesus' time. Most people today are at least aware of their existence, although they may not influence everyone's behavior. In last Sunday's Gospel reading, the Sadducees (political aristocrats) attempted to put Jesus in a catch-22 by asking how they should approach paying the tax to Caesar. Jesus was not distracted from his primary purpose, as we should not be when it comes to political questions and issues that might divide us.

In this Sunday's readings, the Pharisees (lay people concerned with preserving Mosaic tradition) take a shot at testing Jesus:

*When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees,
they gathered together, and one of them,
a scholar of the law tested him by asking,
"Teacher, which commandment in the law is the
greatest?"
He said to him,
"You shall love the Lord, your God,
with all your heart, with all your soul,
and with all your mind.
This is the greatest and the first commandment.
The second is like it:
You shall love your neighbor as yourself.
The whole law and the prophets depend on these two
commandments."*

Again, Jesus does not take the bait. Rather, he shares a way of life that is consistent with the principles of 12-step recovery and the sacramental life of the Catholic Church. Through working the Steps, we get an opportunity to know and love God in an authentic way. This begins when we admit our own powerlessness over behaviors, substances, and circumstances. Next, we find hope from those who have walked this journey before us and learn to surrender our will and lives over to God's care.

A searching and fearless moral inventory reveals more about our own human nature, especially the part that we play in untangling challenging relationships. Sharing what we've found with another individual brings us closer to each other and encourages us to continue the process of healing.

Having found the fruit of relying upon God, we give more to Him, humbly asking Him to remove our shortcomings. This not-so-simple request is an act of love toward our Creator, who fashions us in His image and supports our well-being. He also gives us the courage and strength to face our neighbor, who we are asked to love as ourselves.

The Eighth and Ninth Steps are designed to bring love to others, especially where we have gone astray. Bringing honesty and empathy back into these relationships reunites us with the Body of Christ. We find membership in this body through our baptism and have a tangible way of re-encountering this love through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Nurturing this spiritual awakening is done by continuing to take personal inventory, admitting when we're wrong, growing closer to Christ through prayer and meditation, serving others, and practicing these principles in all our affairs.

Sacramentally, we are nourished by the Eucharist and sent on mission through our confirmation. As time passes, the two commandments mentioned by Jesus—love the Lord with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself—become a way of life when we stay committed to fellowship, freedom, and faith.

Reflection Questions

- How have you experienced your love for God and neighbor grow since participating in addiction recovery?
- Have you re-entered recovery or a Christian community after a relapse or some time away? How did you experience the love of God and neighbor?
- Who is your neighbor?

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- Your generosity directly helps CIR start and maintain in-person and virtual meetings; host retreats, webinars, and an upcoming international convention; adapt resources in Spanish; launch a podcast; and print electronic resources
- Find more info at catholicinrecovery.com/growth23

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Exodus 22:20-26

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 18:2-3, 3-4, 47, 51

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10

Gospel: Matthew 22:34-40