

GOSPEL
Mark 12:28-34

One of the scribes came up to Jesus and put a question to him, ‘Which is the first of all the commandments?’ Jesus replied, ‘This is the first: Listen, Israel, the Lord our God is the one Lord, and you must 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 must love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.’ The scribe said to him, ‘Well spoken, Master; what you have said is true: that he is one and there is no other. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself, this is far more important than any holocaust or sacrifice.’ Jesus, seeing how wisely he had spoken, said, ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’ And after that no one dared to question him any more.

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS
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In today’s liturgy, the Gospel presents a scribe who approaches Jesus and asks him: “Which commandment is the first of all?” (Mk 12:28). Jesus responds by citing Scripture and stating that the first commandment is to love God; from this one then derives the second, as a natural consequence: to love one’s neighbour as oneself (cf. vv. 29-31). Hearing this response, the scribe not only recognises that he is right, but in doing so, in recognising that he is right, he repeats the same words Jesus had said: “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that... to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbour as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices” (vv. 32-33).

We can ask ourselves, in giving his assent, why did that scribe feel the need to repeat Jesus’ same words? This repetition seems to be more surprising if we think that this is the Gospel of Mark, who has a very concise style. So, what could this repetition mean? This repetition is a teaching for all of us who are listening. For the Word of the Lord cannot be received as any other type of news. The Word of the Lord should be repeated, made

one’s own, safeguarded. The monastic tradition of the monks, uses an audacious but very concrete term. It goes like this: the Word of God must be “ruminated”. “To ruminate” the Word of God. We could say that it is so nutritious that it must reach every aspect of life: to involve, as Jesus says today, the entire heart, the entire soul, the entire mind, all of our strength (cf. v. 30). The Word of the Lord must resound, echo and re-echo within us. When there is this interior echo that repeats itself, it means that the Lord dwells in the heart. And he says to us, just as he did to that good scribe in the Gospel: “You are not far from the kingdom of God” (v. 34).

Dear brothers and sisters, the Lord does not seek skilled commentators of the Scriptures, as much as he seeks docile hearts that, welcoming his Word, allow themselves to be changed within. This is why it is so important to be familiar with the Gospel, to always have it at hand — even a small-sized Gospel in our pockets, in our purses to read and reread, to be passionate about it. When we do this, Jesus, the Word of the Father, enters into our hearts, he becomes intimate with us and we bear fruit in Him. Let us take for example today’s Gospel: it is not enough to read it and understand that we should love God and our neighbour. It is necessary that this commandment, which is the “great commandment”, resound in us, that it be assimilated, that it become the voice of our conscience. This way, it does not remain a dead letter, in the drawer of the heart, because the Holy Spirit makes the seed of that Word germinate in us. And the Word of God works, it is always in motion, it is living and active (cf. Heb 4:12). So each one of us can become a living, different and original “translation”, not a repetition but a living, different and original “translation” of the one Word of love that God gives us. This is what we see in the lives of the Saints for example. None of them is the same as another. They are all different, but with the same Word of God.

Today, therefore, let us take the example of this scribe. Let us repeat Jesus’ words, making them resound in us: “To love God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind and with all our strength and my

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neighbour as myself". And let us ask ourselves: does this commandment truly orient my life? Does this commandment resonate in my daily life? It would be good this evening, before going to sleep, to make an examination of conscience on this Word, to see if we have loved the Lord today and if we have done a little good to those we happened to meet. May every encounter bring about a little bit of good, a little bit of love that comes from this Word. May the Virgin Mary, in whom the Word of God was made flesh, teach us to welcome the living word of the Gospel in our hearts.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: How can we avoid engaging with the Scriptures purely out of obligation or simply as an intellectual exercise?



Heart: What does it mean to you to have the Word of God enter your heart? Is this something you have experienced?



Hands: *Following from Pope Francis' prompting, take a few minutes in silence to examine your conscience: Today, have I loved God with all my heart, soul, and mind? Have I loved my neighbour as myself?*

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (for example, "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the 'Glory Be'.