



Christ in Our Neighborhood

Prayer

Father, may Your will be done. Help us to remember that we have a place in Your Kingdom, where You live and reign, together with your Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Commentary

1st Reading: Dt 6:2-6

Our *CION* series on the Banquet of the Lord included in Week 22 of this year a review of the Ten Commandments.

Our First Reading and Gospel this week invite us to go deeper as we reflect on the purpose of any commandment or law of God.

God's intent to lay out laws and precepts is not to show His power and might. Nor does He intend for us to be slaves to the law. Rather, the purpose of the law was to keep us in right relationship and communion with God and with each other.

In ancient near Eastern cultures, the law was a sign of a unified people. They helped unify their king with the people and the people with each other. The laws were there to protect their communion. This was the purpose for Jewish laws and precepts as well.

For this reason, we read in Deuteronomy, the primary purpose of the communal law is LOVE.

Children obey laws to avoid punishment or to obtain rewards. People of mature faith adopt the laws of God to abide in His love.

Question

Why do you obey God's commands?

Commentary

2nd Reading: Hebrews 7:23-28

Understanding that laws are meant to be broken, then there must be a way to repair what was broken. In reality, what is broken can't ever be restored to what it originally was. Unless God intervenes.

In the Jewish tradition, God did intervene when laws were broken. He set up a system (rituals) with Hebrew priests to offer daily sacrifices to God in order to correct and repair the broken covenant of love.

Our Second Reading reminds us that the priests of old were working overtime to keep the covenant of love intact. But, as much as they offered sacrifices day after day, the people would continue to sin.

The bottom line is that their love for the Lord was lacking. Of course, God understood this and thus provided for us the finest of all remedies. He would become one like us in all things but sin, so that He could be that one righteous person who was capable of loving God and humanity perfectly.

Jesus (God and Man) became for us that High priest who offered himself as a perpetual (not daily) sacrifice for our salvation.

Question

How is Mass a celebration of that perpetual sacrifice for us?

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Commentary

Gospel: Mark 12:28-34

“If you want to get to heaven, let me tell you what to do,
Gotta grease your feet in mutton stew.
Then slide right out of the slippery sand, And eeeeeeease
over to the Promised Land!”

These words from Woody Guthrie, while humorous, are an example of the thinking many people have about “getting to heaven.”

While many may wonder just how we get to heaven — as Christians we believe Christ is the Way — few consider what they will do when they get there.

If all we do is think that heaven is better than the alternative — Hell isn’t very promising — then we are missing the mark.

Because the scribe answers Jesus correctly about the laws of love, Jesus says, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” Indeed, he understood the purpose of the laws of God, because he understood the purpose of the Kingdom of God. He knew that the laws and the kingdom were all about love. He understood that the kingdom was not somewhere off in the distance because the kingdom of love could be lived right now.

Question

Is heaven something you long for or something you live for?

This Week’s Task

Consider reading a book about a saint and meditating on his or her life. Consider how he/she was not far from the Kingdom of God while here on earth. What page would you be able to take from that saint’s life and apply to your own?

Prayer

The group offers this Act of Love:

O my God,
I love you above all things,
with my whole heart and soul,
because you are all good
and worthy of all my love.
I love my neighbor
as myself for the love of you.
I forgive all who have injured me
and I ask pardon of all
whom I have injured.

The prayer continues with Psalm 18

Psalm

Response: I love you, Lord, my strength.

I love you, O LORD, my strength,
O LORD, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer.

R. I love you, Lord, my strength.

My God, my rock of refuge,
my shield, the horn of my salvation, my stronghold!
Praised be the LORD, I exclaim,
and I am safe from my enemies.

R. I love you, Lord, my strength.

The LORD lives! And blessed be my rock!
Extolled be God my savior.
You who gave great victories to your king
and showed kindness to your anointed.

R. I love you, Lord, my strength.

Conclude with an Our Father