

Reflections

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142 - March 01, 2013

Double Love

Our entire life, when it is truly Christian, is directed toward love: the love for God and for one's neighbor. Only love increases, makes our existence fruitful and guarantees eternal salvation.

For Jews, the first commandment infinitely surpassed the second and was practiced separately. They had a very profound sense of the transcendence of God and his rights. Jesus Christ does not deny the first commandment, but He worries and resists his coreligionists by the form in which He fulfills it: serving man.

And if we ask an ordinary Christian: Which is the great commandment of Christ, his new commandment? He will not respond: the love of God, but He will say to us: "love your neighbor as yourself." Nevertheless, that commandment has nothing new; it is already found in the Old Testament.

So, in what does the novelty which Jesus imprints on these old commandments consist of? The novelty is that Christ has inseparably united these two commandments: True love for God is true love for man. And all genuine love for man is genuine love for God.

This is the great novelty of the Incarnation. We are no longer divided between two loves. We no longer have to take away from man a bit of our time, our money, our heart.....to give it to God.

God is not man's rival: All which is done for the least of men, is done for God. Through the Incarnation, God has become man, God has become solidary with all men; God and man are inseparable. The novelty of the Gospel is the divinization of man and the humanization of God.

It means: prayer, worship, service to God have no value if they do not express and nourish genuine charity, that is, practical and direct service to man. The sign by which it will be recognized that we are disciples of Christ is that we love our brothers and sisters.

What happens is that the love for God separated from the love for man lends itself to many illusions. One can believe in God and not love mankind, like the priest and the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Or like the Pharisees who believed they were serving God when they crucified Jesus.

Let us also remember those words of St. John: "*If anyone says, 'I love God,' but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.*" (1 JN 4, 20)

The final judgment will not be based on our number of Holy Communions, our Sunday Masses, or our religious practices, but on our conduct with our brethren. We will not be questioned on what we have done before God, but on what we have done before others.

St. Augustine, in one of his epistles, says: "Fraternal charity is the only thing which distinguishes the children of God from the children of the devil. All can make the Sign of the Cross, respond amen, become baptized, enter the Church, erect temples. But the children of God are distinguished from the children of the devil by charity (love). You can have all you want; "if you are lacking love, everything else is worthless."

The first Christians simply called themselves brothers. They had only one heart and only one soul. Even the pagans would exclaim: "See how they love one another." It is the greatest eulogy which can be said of a Christian community. But I do not know if today's pagans could say the same of all Christians. Nevertheless, the miracle needed by the present times, the miracle for which our world is open to, is the miracle of love and fraternity among Christians.

Questions for reflection

1. Is our community a fraternal one?
2. Are these concepts valid in today's world?
3. What can I do for others?

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