

SCC Reflections

31st Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year B. Mark 12: 28-34

TEXT

[28] And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?"

[29] Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one;

[30] and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

[31] The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

[32] And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that he is one, and there is no other but he;

[33] and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

[34] And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to ask him any question.

1. The commandments tell us God's will. The first of the commandments asks us what is it that God wants of us before all else. What does he want us to put all our energies into? Jesus' answer is a high point of, the high point of his activities. The fact that the scribe just repeats what Jesus says underlines its importance.

2. Jesus repeats Deuteronomy 6:4- "Hear O Israel. You must love the Lord your God, with all your heart..." Our first task is to love God with everything we have got, our heart which means our will, our soul, i.e., our entire life force, our mind, namely our intellect and with all our strength. We must love God with the totality of our being. But, realistically, is this possible? We are all so distracted by what is around us. Can we be commanded to love?
3. With this commandment, Jesus is not looking for a specific act, not just sacrifices or prayers. He is pushing us to wake up and engage our whole personality in the search to love God. It is a lifetime task not something to be done in a day
4. We must remember that it is Jesus who reveals God to us.
5. Jesus also mentions the second great commandment: Love your neighbour as yourself. Loving ourselves in our uniqueness means accepting myself, this person that God has created with all its gifts and limits and accepting that God has made me for a future with God. In the same way we must accept all others in their God given uniqueness. These too come from God's love and we both have the same destiny in God. Yes, there are differences but fundamentally we all share the same human dignity.
6. Give to God what belongs to God (12:7). God is our creator and destiny and so we must love God with our whole being. Neither I nor my neighbour are God and so we don't love ourselves or our neighbours with our whole being like we love God. Our love for ourselves and for our neighbour must be appropriate.