

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

By: Fr. Greg Ames

We want our morning news hosts to appear if they like one another; that they are friends. At least that is what TV producers think. CBS has never had a successful morning show; they compete against NBC's Today Show that advertises its hosts as America's First Family. So, in revamping their show, CBS hired four new hosts; but none have ever worked together before. In an article title, "Co-hosts Take the Forced March of Friendship," it was reported how these four have embarked on an intense program so that they can truly be chummy on camera. The week of intense bonding includes meals together, parties and interviewing one another's families. The question the article posed was whether the forced camaraderie will be enough to make them appear the best of friends. Someone remarked, *If they get along and people at home like them, CBS stands to gain in ratings and profits. If not, it's back to Love Boat reruns.*

You know what sort of people we were for your sake...

Relationships take time; there are times when there is an instant connection. But most times, relationships don't happen overnight. They take work. Jesus' message is that God powerfully and deeply cares for us. Jesus wants our relationship with him to be one of deep love; so that we could turn to all our other relationships—with people we know and those we don't—and slowly, carefully, become people of love. The readings today tell us that our relationship with Christ and with each other needs:

COMMITMENT It all begins with the commitment that God makes to us: to always be with us; to always care for us; to always lead us. Jesus commits to stand with us; not only in times when we are nice and friendly; but when we are confused, upset—when snipers kill or a classmate dies suddenly. He is with us in all the moments that test our faith. There are times that we might want to give up on God. What the Israelites learned in the desert; what Jesus taught and what Paul preached is that God understands. God will never give up on us.

COMPASSIONS The reading from Exodus contains a powerful challenge. God has been compassionate and loving to the people. God did not want the disappointments of life to make them so bitter, that they were then unkind and mean to one another. God says, Remember, you were aliens once. God wanted their difficulties to harden their hearts, but to fill them with compassion toward others. It is the challenge that God asks of us each day. You were lonely once; you were depressed; you were struggling and confused; you said something stupid; you made a mistake; you broke a promise; you forgot. God wants us to remember those things; not to make us feel bad or guilty; but to soften our hearts, to make us more compassionate in all our relationships.

COMMANDMENTS When I was an associate, I had a pastor who was short and to the point. I was there when the wedding photographer, sensing the pastor was a tough guy, meekly asked, "Msgr., what are your rules?" He was told, "I have three." And the photographer, listened intently, appearing to want to write them down as to not forget or break them: don't be a pest; don't be a pest; don't be a pest. Jesus reduced all the precepts and laws and commandments to one word: love; love; love. Not mushy sentimentality. He wanted us to be people who, in all our relationships, built people up; offered them hope; listened to their needs; stood with them in need. Even when we do not know people; even when they are not our friends, love does not mean we pretend we are chummy. It means that we treat them as Jesus treated all people: with respect, with concern. That is what Paul meant when he told the Thessalonians, You know what sort of people we were for your sake. He wanted them and he wanted us to be the same sort of people. People who build their lives and all their relationships on the command of Jesus, to be people who love.

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Exodus 22:20-26

1 Thessalonians 1:5-10

Matthew 22:34-40

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序言： 一位法學士試探耶穌問說：「師傅，法律中那條誠命最大？」耶穌引用了二段古經答覆了他。首先耶穌引用了申命紀第六章四至六節，說：「你當全心、全靈、全意愛上主，你的天主。」這是最大的，也是第一條誠命，第二條與此相似，耶穌遂引了肋未紀第十九章第十八節：「你當愛近人如你自己」，最後耶穌結論說：「全部法律和先知，都繫於這兩條誠命。」古教法律總共有六一三條誠命：三六五條是禁令：「你不可做什麼」，二四八條是命令：「你應該做什麼」，這麼多誠命，當然難以記住，更難以遵守，當時的法學士經常爭論的一個問題是：「這麼多誠命中，哪幾條最大？」這個法學士用同一個問題來試探耶穌，耶穌舉出兩條：「全心愛主」及「愛人如己」為最重要，並強調說：「誰守了這兩條誠命，就守全了所有的誠命，誰沒有遵守這兩條誠命，做什麼都沒有用，等於什麼也沒有做！」

愛主必愛人： 法學士只問：「那條誠命最大？」耶穌回答之後，卻又加上了一條和第一條誠命相似的誠命，就是「愛人如己」。看來耶穌是第一個把愛主愛人這兩條誠命緊緊相聯在一起，祂刻意把人際關係提升到人和天主間的關係。從此我們愛人，不只是因為我們屬於同一人類，我們在愛天主的同時，也參與了天主的愛。天主愛祂所創造的人，預定我們成為自己的子女，因此我汎愛所有的人，一如我們的兄弟姊妹，我們是同一天父的子女，我們不可能愛天主而不汎愛眾人，聖若望宗徒說「我們從主那裡蒙受了這命令。」那愛天主的，也該愛自己的弟兄，假使有人說：「我愛天主。」卻惱恨自己的弟兄，便是撒謊者，因為那不愛自己所看見的弟兄，就不能愛自己所看不見的天主（若壹書四 20-21）。古教中「愛人」的誠命只及於本族的人，雖然梅瑟的愛人誠命也包括外邦人，但只及於住在猶太境內的外方人，對於境外的外邦人，則避之唯恐不及，怕他們玷汙了自己，但是保祿給迦拉達人寫道：「你們由於信仰基督，成了天主的兒女，不再分猶太人或希臘人、奴隸或自由人、男人或女人，因為你們在基督內已成了一個。」（迦三 26-28）誰愛天主必愛人，並且不分種族，愛所有的人，不只是義人，還包括不義的人，甚至仇人。耶穌說：「你們一向聽說過『你應愛你的近人，恨你的仇人』，我卻對你們說：你們當愛你們的仇人，好使你們成為你們在天之父的子女，因為祂使太陽上升，光照惡人，也光照善人，降雨給義人，也給不義的人，你們若只愛你們的近人，還有什麼賞報呢？稅使不也是這樣做嗎？所以你們應當是成全的，如同你們的天父是成全的一樣。」（瑪五 42-48）

愛人必愛主： 上面說：誰愛主必愛人。反過來，是否誰愛人必愛主？好像並不如此，多少不信基督的人也在愛人，也在做好事。證嚴法師愛人不亞於德肋撒修女，請問基督徒愛人和非基督徒愛人，二者之間有何不同？信仰給我們帶來了些什麼？這是一個值得思考的問題，據我這幾年來的思考，我認為基督徒的愛人有二個特點，是非基督徒難以到達的。

其一是：基督徒的愛人比非基督徒的愛人更能持久，不論在什麼環境中，會繼續愛下去，愛是一種冒險的付出，你敞開心門去愛人，如果你得到的不是「接受」、「珍視」、「感激」、「以愛還愛」、而是「冷漠」、「忽視」、「不希罕」、「愛理不理」，甚至「完全拒絕」，進而「恩將仇報」，你會受到極大的打擊，你的心會感到嚴重的創傷，一次、二次、八次、十次之後，你會逐漸關閉你的心門，「多愛多受傷，少愛少受傷，不愛不受傷」，最後，你的心會死掉，哀莫大於心死，從此你不再愛人。但是，如果你是基督徒，你會想到你的老師基督，祂愛人愛到底，愛到死，死後祂的肋膀被士兵用槍刺透，從此祂的心門永遠敞開，祂對我們的愛永不止息，我們做祂徒弟的，不論在什麼環境中，我們終不能關閉我們的心門，我們當一至直愛下去。

其二是：愛仇。愛中間最困難，也最偉大的是寬恕之愛，愛你的仇人；耶穌在十字架上，在萬分痛苦臨死之前，祂寬恕把祂釘在十字架上的仇人，祂為他們向天父求情：「父呀！寬恕他們吧，因為他們不知道他們做的是什麼？」（路廿三 34），耶穌給我們立了表樣，我們做基督徒的，理當效法祂愛我們的仇人。

結論： 如果你們向我說：「神父，可否把天主教當信的道理和當守的誠命，三言二語，簡單明瞭地說出來？」三言二語已經太多了，一個字就夠了：「愛」，「天主是愛」（若壹四 8），唯一信道是「相信天主愛我們」，「既然天主這樣愛了我們，我們也應該彼此相愛。」（若壹四 11）這是若望的啟示。可知：（1）唯一信道是「信仰主愛」，（2）唯一誠命是「彼此相愛」。一切盡在其中，如果你們還疑惑，請聽耶穌說：「如果你們彼此相愛，別人會認出你們是我的徒弟來。」如果你們還疑惑，請聽耶穌公審判時的問話：祂不問你有否領洗，祂不問星期天有否望彌撒，祂不問你有否祈禱守齋，祂只問你一句話：「你最小的弟兄有需要時，你是否幫助過他？有，升天堂；沒有，下地獄。」就是這麼乾脆，我不說領洗、望彌撒、祈禱、守齋不重要，不只重要，甚至非常重要。因為我們自私自利，只會愛自己，不會愛別人。天主是愛，我們需要用祈禱克苦，求得天主的恩寵，幫助我們愛主愛人。我用神父唸的日課經，第一週星期六午時結束禱詞，作為這篇證道的結束祈禱。「上主，祢是永恆的愛，生命的光，請以祢的愛燃燒我們，使能愛祢在萬有之上，並以同樣的愛，為了祢而愛我們的兄弟姊妹。」