



1) Opening prayer

God our Father,
may we love you in all things and above all things
and reach the joy you have prepared for us
beyond all our imagining.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

2) Gospel Reading - Matthew 22,34-40

The Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees they got together and, to put him to the test, one of them put a further question, 'Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?'

Jesus said to him, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: You must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets too.'

3) Reflection

- The text is enlightened. Jesus is in Jerusalem and precisely in the Temple where a process between he and his adversaries is taking place, the chief priests and the Scribes (20, 18; 21, 15), between the chief priests and the elders of the people (21, 23) and between the chief priests and the Pharisees (21, 45). The point of controversy of the debate is: the identity of Jesus or of the Son of David, the origin of his identity, and, therefore, the question regarding the nature of the Kingdom of God. The evangelist presents this plot of debates with a sequence of controversies that present a growing rhythm: the tribute to be paid to Caesar (22, 15-22), the resurrection of the dead (22, 23-33), the greatest commandment (22, 34-40), the Messiah, son and Lord of David (22, 41-46). The protagonists of the first three discussions are representatives of the official Judaism who try to place Jesus in difficulty on some crucial questions. These disputes are addressed to Jesus in so far as he is "Master" (Rabbi), this title tells the reader the understanding that the interlocutors have of Jesus. But Jesus takes this occasion to lead

them to ask themselves a more crucial question: the last time they took position concerning his identity (22, 41-46).

- The greatest commandment. On the trail of the Sadducees who have preceded, the Pharisees ask Jesus a burning question: which is the greatest commandment? The Rabbis always first made evident the multiplicity of the prescriptions (248 commandments) the question is asked to Jesus regarding which is the fundamental precept. Just the same the Rabbis themselves had created a true survey to reduce them as far as possible: David lists eleven (Ps 15, 2-5), Isaiah six (Is 33, 15), Micah three (Mi 6, 8), Amos two (Am 5, 4) and Habakkuk only one (Hab 2, 4). But the intention of the Pharisees regarding their question, goes beyond every type of survey, it is a question of the essence itself of the prescriptions. Jesus, in answering binds together love of God and love of neighbour, so much so as to unite them in only one, but without renouncing to give priority to the first one, which subordinates, in a close way, the second one. Thus, all the prescriptions of the Law, they were 613, are placed in relationship with this unique commandment: the whole Law finds its significance and foundation in the one of love. Jesus carries out a process of simplification of all the precepts of the Law: anyone who puts into practice the only commandment of love does not only observe the Law, but also the prophets (v. 40). Just the same, the novelty of the response is not so much in the material content as in its realization: in Jesus, the love of God and love of neighbour have their own context, their last solidity. That is to say, that God's love and of neighbour, shown and realized in some way in his person, guides man to place himself before God and before others through love. The only commandment in two, God's love and love for neighbour, become the supporting column, not only of the Scriptures, but also of the life of the Christian.

4) Personal questions

- Is love for God and for neighbour only a vague sentiment, an emotion, a passing motion or a reality that affirms your whole person: heart, will, intelligence and human relationships?
- You were created out of love. Are you aware that your fulfilment takes place in God's love, to love Him with the whole heart, with the whole soul, with the whole mind? Such a love demands a confirmation of charity toward the brothers and sisters and their situation of life. Do you practice this in daily life?

5) Concluding Prayer

Let them thank Yahweh for his faithful love,
for his wonders for the children of Adam!
He has fed the hungry to their hearts' content,
filled the starving with good things. (Ps 107,8-9)