

12. June 2024

Keeping and Teaching the Commandments

Mt 5:17-19

'Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them. In truth I tell you, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, not one little stroke, is to disappear from the Law until all its purpose is achieved. Therefore, anyone who infringes even one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered the least in the kingdom of Heaven; but the person who keeps them and teaches them will be considered great in the kingdom of Heaven.'

God cannot contradict Himself, and anyone who thinks he can change God's Law is in grave error and great danger. God's commandments are an enormous gift to humanity. They remind us of God's presence. We are the recipients, and it is not up to us to arbitrarily do everything as we please. Wrong ways bring misfortune. In these times, it is a great temptation to deviate from God and His commandments, and to live as one considers to be right. However, this is how true love is extinguished. Jesus Himself points out that those who love Him keep His commandments (cf. Jn 14:21).

St. Paul speaks of the Law *"as a slave to look after us"* until the coming of Christ (cf. Gal 3:24). In his proclamation, Paul never tires of pointing out again and again that with the New Covenant a new stage is inaugurated, more important and greater than the previous one. Thanks to the coming of the Son of God, through the Death and Resurrection of Jesus, there now dwells in the world a grace that surpasses the glory of the Old Covenant. The Redeemer came and took upon Himself the yoke of the Law. He Himself fulfilled the Law in the most perfect way, gave His life as an atoning sacrifice for all sins and offers us forgiveness of sins. Thus, a new reality enters into this world, which is brought even more deeply by the Resurrection of Jesus and the descent of the Holy Spirit.

With this grace of Jesus' coming into the world, we are not only able to keep the commandments; we are also called to understand them in their deepest sense. Let us remember, for example, that Jesus makes it clear to us that not only does it violate God's

commandment to commit adultery concretely; but that *“if a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart”* (Mt 5:28). We see that here the commandment is broken down even more finely.

The coming of the Son of God into the world and the merciful love with which He comes to meet us, then, in no way means that God's commandments are no longer so important, much less that they are obsolete. On the contrary, we can discover their wisdom even more, in order to praise God. For example, if the Word of the Lord and the teaching of the Church tell us that practised homosexuality is a grave sin and that people with such tendencies are called to convert to the Lord and live in chastity, this is by no means “merciless” or “unmerciful”, even if in today's world it is not accepted, and even in the Church itself there are currents that try to adapt to the mentality of the world in this respect. But it is part of true love to hold on to the truth. This love wants to help the people concerned to find their way according to God's will, because only in the fulfilment of His commands can there be true happiness.

This Gospel passage exhorts us to bear witness to the truth. It is precisely in the light of the New Testament that we can even better convey to people that God's law is not simply a rule to be observed and that otherwise negative consequences will follow. We must proclaim the beauty and wisdom of God's commandments!

Let us take as a wonderful example that commandment of which the Lord tells us that it is the most important:

“To put him to the test, one of them (the Pharisees) 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’ (Mt 22:35-37).

This is the first commandment:

“I am Yahweh your God (...) You shall have no other gods to rival me” (Ex 20:2-3). *“The Lord your God is the one to whom you must do homage, Him alone you must serve”* (Mt 4:10).

Here Jesus pronounces something that should be most natural, but which we have lost. The Lord reminds us of the true happiness of man, which can never be found outside the commandments. Putting these words of Jesus into practice is the meaning of our

existence; we can never praise God enough for it! Indeed, in loving God we find our deepest identity and our eternal home, and God can draw His child to Himself and fill Him with Himself.

If we meditate on each particular commandment, we will discover the wisdom it contains, for they were all given to us by the One who is Wisdom Himself.

Therefore, we can well understand that the Lord commends those who teach men to keep and love the commandments. Like every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, the commandments are true life. To proclaim them and to teach them to people means, therefore, to pass on true life.