

The Greatest Commandment: Love of God, Love of oneself, and love of neighbor.

The Eucharist, the Sacrament of love, invites us constantly to appreciate the love God has for us. It challenges us to experience this love and show it in our relationship with God and one another. Strikingly, today's readings, among other things, invite us to reflect on the three dimensions of this love- the love of God, the love of oneself, and the love of neighbor- the greatest commandment. The love we have for God guides and directs the other two dimensions of love.

Jesus in the Mark's Gospel today, in answering one of the Scribes who asked about the greatest commandment, repeats the words of the first reading of the Book of Deuteronomy. He invites us to love God with all our heart, mind, and soul; and to love our neighbor as ourselves. The question can be: why do we have to love God? Simply, we have to love him because he loves us first. Out of his love, he created us in his image and likeness, redeemed us in his love, and will save us in his love, which our second reading, the letter to the Hebrews, describes for us. We show that we love him by the efforts we make to do his will and not our own that sometimes opposes his will- "If you love me, you will keep my commandment" (Jn. 14: 15).

The second part of this greatest commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves. It presupposes that before we can love our neighbor as God wants us, we have to love ourselves according to God's love. The love of oneself is not limited to only taking care of our physical needs, food, clothing, leisure, or other comforts but also taking care of our spiritual needs. When we have a balanced love of ourselves according to God's will, we can use it as a yardstick to measure the love we have for our neighbor.

The third dimension of the love God calls is the love for our neighbor. Who is this neighbor? A question like this was asked to Jesus in Luke 10: 29-37, which led to the parable of the Good Samaritan. The parable helps to define who our neighbor is. Our neighbor goes beyond someone who lives in the same area or vicinity with us, but anyone who needs our help anytime and anywhere. Our neighbor can be a widow, an orphan, a beggar, a disabled, a stranger, or even somebody we live in the same house can be our neighbor who needs our love, attention, and compassion. Let us ask the good Lord, the source of love, to shower his love in our hearts so that we can experience it truly and be able to share the same with others. Amen