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Friday's Gospel: God's Words are Clear

Gospel for Friday in the 20th week of Ordinary Time, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 22:34-40*)

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they came together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, to test him. “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?”

And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and

with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.”

Commentary

For some reason, we find it difficult to believe God, to accept his words. He tells us things over and over again, and yet it seems as if we don't understand, or don't want to understand. We make him explain the same thing repeatedly.

History repeats itself from Adam and Eve until today. Our first parents were told that eating the fruit from a certain tree would bring them death, and yet they went ahead and did it. The consequences are still felt today.

Something similar happens with the commandments. Today we see Jesus being questioned about which is the greatest of them. Our Lord replies by simply invoking the *Shema Israel*, which all Jews learned as children and had prayed for centuries: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (*Deut* 6:5). And he adds another ancient precept: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (*Lev* 19:18).

We know that Jesus’ response is the result of a question he was asked “to test him.” Unfortunately, we too can often do something similar.

Isn’t everything required for our salvation easily found in writing and in tradition? We have the Holy Scripture, the Catechism of the Church, the Magisterium of the

Roman Pontiffs. We also have access to the sacraments and to spiritual accompaniment. We have the path clearly set out, and yet sometimes we don't let ourselves to be convinced by it. God speaks to us in many and various ways (cf. *Heb* 1:1), but we continue to ask questions that have already been answered.

Therefore, today's Gospel passage can be a call for us to heed the apostle James' invitation: "he who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer that forgets but a doer that acts, he shall be blessed in his doing" (*Jas* 1:25). That is what the life of a Christian is all about: living by the *lex perfecta libertatis*, the perfect law of freedom, which requires studying it and assimilating it thoroughly in our own life.

What gives us freedom is loving God and our neighbor, and this is what

leads us to happiness. That is why God gave us the commandments. In fact, before giving us the commandment to love God with our whole heart, He himself announces the destiny of those who follow it: “Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you,” (*Deut 6:3*). May we all finally be convinced of what God is telling us.

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