

# Thursday's Gospel: Loving God and Neighbor

Gospel for Thursday in the 9th Week of Ordinary Time, and commentary.

## **Gospel (*Mk 12:28-34*)**

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that Jesus answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all

your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that he is one, and there is no other but he; and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to ask him any question.

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## Commentary

In today's Gospel passage, our Lord responds to a scribe's questions about which is the first commandment of God's law. And then, to show how closely united it is to the previous one, he right away adds the second one: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Both precepts constitute the core of Christian morality, and are so closely united that they cannot be separated if we want to achieve the fulness of life to which God is calling us. Pope Benedict explained this double precept in the following way: "We learn to look at each other not only with our eyes, but with the eyes of God, which is the look of Christ. A look that begins in the heart and does not stop at the surface, that goes beyond appearances and grasps the deepest aspirations of the other person: the desire to be heard, for caring attention, in a word: for love. But the reverse is also true: by

opening myself to another, just as he or she is, by reaching out, by making myself available, I am also opening myself to know God, to feel that He is there and is good. Love of God and love of neighbor are inseparable and are mutually related.”<sup>[1]</sup>

Jesus’ teaching is not merely a matter of words. His whole life shows us his complete self-giving to the Father and to mankind, until its final consummation on Calvary, thus inviting us to imitate Him and become faithful disciples.

In a homily entitled “With the Strength of Love,” Saint Josemaria said “The Master’s message and example are clear and precise. He confirmed his teaching with deeds . . . If we profess the same faith and are really eager to follow in the clear footprints left by Christ when he walked on this earth, we cannot be content merely with avoiding

doing unto others the evil that we would not have them do unto us. That is a lot, but it is still very little when we consider that our love is to be measured in terms of Jesus' own conduct.”<sup>[2]</sup>

<sup>[1]</sup> Benedict XVI, *Angelus*, 4 November 2012.

<sup>[2]</sup> Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 223.

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