

Readings Deuteronomy 6: 2-6; Hebrews 7:23-28; Mark 12:28-34



Fr Michael says:

The Two Great Commandments

Today we enter the heart of the Scripture message to us – there ARE only 2 Commandments: to love God and then those around us. This would have come as a mighty shock to the People, who had been brought up with the idea that there were 613 (hence the use of pomegranates in the friezes in the synagogue at Capharnaum, although the two main ones Jesus chooses are actually taken from Leviticus and Numbers. The question asked is one which was constantly being asked of rabbis, but no one had actually put the two together as He did. The Scribe affirms Jesus' teaching, that they are the essential and therefore more important than elaborate rituals. Hebrews affirms Jesus situation vis a vis the other Priests and so underlines the value of what He says!

Today's Society puts before us the reality that loving our neighbour is hard, because we do not know who they are, we can so easily be taken up into our own little world. G K. Chesterton says that the reason why Jesus said love neighbour and also our enemies is because they can be often the same person! We can think of remote people as persons but we may not do the same with our neighbour because we see him/her as part of the environment in which we may or may not like, to be lumped together and seen in this way. "Where there is no love, let us sow love and we will reap love. Where there is no love, let us put love, and we will find love." If we seek God alone we will not find Him, as we cannot see Him, likewise for the soul, it eludes us but when seeking a neighbour we find all three!

Practising Catholics can face a problem. We tend not to see the connection between what we do here and now, in Church, and our relations with others in the rest of the week. We can so often limit our examinations of conscience to "holy" things or lack of them and can ignore a whole range of moral and social areas in our lives. Much of our lives can be seen to be private not needing examination. Our relationship with God is not private either, to see it so is gravely worrying. It is so easy for us to separate the two and can just bathe ourselves in a sea of "love". Christopher Reeve or Superman said, whilst recovering from his broken spine and had received a huge number of letters of sympathy: "Why does it take a tragedy before we show our appreciation for one another?" A very good question indeed for us to answer! Our hearts need to be touched by God to be able to do that as part of our daily lives. If our hearts are right we can give so much more!