



First Reading: (*Deut 6:2-6*) Moses said to the people “May you fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son’s son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life; and that your days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them; that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. “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. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart.

Ps 17:2-4, 47, 51

R./ I love you, Lord, my strength.

Second Reading: (*Heb 7:23-28*) The priests of the old covenant were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues for ever. Consequently

he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did this once for all when he offered up himself. Indeed, the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect for ever.

Gospel: (*Mk 12:28-34*) One of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he 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 command-

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ment 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.

REFLECTION

At the time of Jesus, the Jews had a number of laws derived from the Pentateuch. Among the scholarly circle there was always a debate as to which of them were ‘heavy’ and which of them were ‘light’ that is, which of them ranked as more essential than the others. With that in mind a scribe asks Jesus, ‘which is the greatest of the commandments?’ Without any hesitation Jesus told them what they were already familiar from the book of Deuteronomy 6: 5 “Hear of Israel...” The content of it is an invitation to love God with one’s whole heart. With this command Jesus joins the command to love one’s neighbour, making them into one commandment. **The primacy of love is emphasized – love of God and neighbour.** The scribe perceives well what Jesus has pointed out and adds that it is better than burnt offerings and sacrifices. For a Jew, it is true that the rituals and sacrifices are important. But he perceives that love of God and neighbour are of primary place than all other rituals and sacrifices. That perception attracts positive comments from Jesus. In our case too, the perception of the primacy of love above all other will bring us closer to God’s kingdom.