

AUGUST 20, 2021
Memorial of St. Bernard, Abbot & Doctor of the Church
Matthew 22: 34-40

“THE GREATEST OF ALL IS LOVE.”

In the gospel of Matthew, he presented three heated arguments and encounters with Jesus’ opponents by showing that he was in opposition to the Law of Moses. First, the Pharisees asked Him if it is right to pay taxes to Caesar or not (Matthew 22: 15-22). This question is putting Jesus in a situation that what ever answer He gives, He will be in the wrong position and say the wrong thing. Second, the question of the Saducees, (Matthew 22: 23-33) who will be the husband of a woman who married the seven brothers, giving Jesus and others who believed in the resurrection of the dead, a difficult situation. Both of these encounters, Jesus answered them with precise and clear explanations and caught His enemies off-guard and amazed.

Today’s gospel is the third encounter. Pharisses, who were very pleased that Jesus silenced the Sadducees, had their own question too: “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?”¹ Jesus answered it referring to Shema Israel (Deuteronomy 6:5) and the complimentary Law (Leviticus 19:18) which every Jews recite as prayer and profession of faith. Jesus combined the two as the true essence of religion and can not be separated because they are complimentary with each other. These are known to Jesus’ listeners because it is in their mouth, recited everyday, they only need to observe and live it.

But do we express that love of God and neighbor? What makes it complimentary and can not be separated? “How do we love God? There are several means by which we can express our love for God: a) by thanking God daily for His blessings and expressing our gratitude by obeying His Commandments; b) by being reconciled with God daily,

¹ Matthew 22: 36 Holy Bible NRSVCE Canadian Bible Society

confessing our sins, and asking His forgiveness; c) by acknowledging our total dependence on God, presenting our needs before Him with trusting Faith; d) by keeping friendship with God, daily talking to Him in prayer and listening to Him in reading the Bible; and e) by recharging our spiritual batteries through participating in Sunday Mass, receiving Jesus in Holy Communion, and through leading a Sacramental life. And how do we love our neighbor? Since every human being is the child of God and the dwelling place of the Spirit of God, created in the image and likeness of God and saved by the precious Blood of Christ, we are actually giving expression to our love of God by loving our neighbor as Jesus loves him, and by loving Jesus in our neighbor. This means we need to help, support, encourage, forgive, and pray for every one of God's children without discrimination based on color, race, creed, gender, age wealth or social status."²

My brothers and sisters, how do we live and practice this two greatest commandments? St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Abbot and Doctor of the Church one of our greatest example in living the two commandments that Jesus taught. He was an adviser to popes, preacher and advocate of the Second Crusade, defender of the Roman Catholic faith against schism. All his life was dedicated in loving God and expressing it in loving others by promoting peace, reconciliation, service and faithfulness to the Church. The reflection of his love to Christ was his life given to those who needed him, by caring them and preaching the truth about Christ and the Church. He was a reformer of a monastic order, founded the Cistercian Order, a scripture scholar, theologian, and Marian devotee.

So, let us ask the Lord in this Eucharist that we may love God and our brothers and sisters with all our hearts and mind and without any boundaries and hesitation.

² <http://frtonyshomilies.com/>