

First reading Deuteronomy 6:2-6**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart**

Moses said to the people: 'If you fear the Lord your God all the days of your life and if you keep all his laws and commandments which I lay on you, you will have a long life, you and your son and your grandson. Listen then, Israel, keep and observe what will make you prosper and give you great increase, as the Lord the God of your fathers has promised you, giving you a land where milk and honey flow.

'Listen, Israel: the Lord our God is the one Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength. Let these words I urge on you today be written on your heart.'

Responsorial Psalm 17(18):2-4,47,51**I love you, Lord, my strength.**

I love you, Lord, my strength,
my rock, my fortress, my saviour.
My God is the rock where I take refuge;
my shield, my mighty help, my stronghold.
The Lord is worthy of all praise,
when I call I am saved from my foes.

Long life to the Lord, my rock!
Praised be the God who saves me,
He has given great victories to his king
and shown his love for his anointed.

Second reading Hebrews 7:23-28**Christ, because he remains for ever, can never lose his priesthood**

There used to be a great number of priests under the former covenant, because death put an end to each one of them; but this one, because he remains for ever, can never lose his priesthood. It follows, then, that his power to save is utterly certain, since he is living for ever to intercede for all who come to God through him. To suit us, the ideal high priest would have to be holy, innocent and uncontaminated, beyond the influence of sinners, and raised up above the heavens; one who would not need to offer sacrifices every day, as the other high priests do for their own sins and then for those of the people, because he has done this once and for all by offering himself. The Law appoints high priests who are men subject to weakness; but the promise on oath, which came after the Law, appointed the Son who is made perfect for ever.

Gospel Acclamation cf. Jn6:63,68**Alleluia, alleluia!**

Your words are spirit, Lord, and they are life;
you have the message of eternal life.

Alleluia!**Gospel Mark 12:28-34****'You are not far from the kingdom of God'**

One of the scribes came up to Jesus and put a question to him, 'Which is the first of all the commandments?' Jesus replied, 'This is the first: Listen, Israel, the Lord our God is the one Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You must love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.' The scribe said to him, 'Well spoken, Master; what you have said is true: that he is one and there is no other. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself, this is far more important than any holocaust or sacrifice.' Jesus, seeing how wisely he had spoken, said, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' And after that no one dared to question him any more.

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Feast Days this Week

Monday 4th November: St Charles Borromeo

Wednesday 6th November: St Illtyd

Thursday 7th November: St Willibrord

Friday 8th November: All Saints of Wales (Wales), Bl John Duns Scotus (Scotland)

Saturday 9th November: Dedication of the Latin Basilica

The Cycle of Prayer**All Victims of War**

especially on Remembrance Sunday (2nd Sunday in November)

Background

Remembrance Sunday falls on the Sunday nearest Armistice Day, 11 November, which marks the end of the First World War. On this day are remembered all those who gave their lives for their country, all who suffered and died through acts of war and those who were left behind to grieve and mourn. In England and Wales one Mass for the Dead may be celebrated on this Sunday.

Prayer

*O God, merciful and strong,
who crush wars and cast down the proud,
be pleased to banish violence swiftly from our midst
and to wipe away all tears,
so that we may all truly deserve to be called your children..*

Roman Missal

Reflection on the Readings

With all your heart

At first sight, today's gospel seems to contain nothing new or startling that was not already known by the Jews of the Old Testament. Indeed the words, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind," were words written on the heart of every Jew, and to this day they form part of the daily prayer a devout Jew is required to say. This prayer is referred to as the Shema, because it begins with the Hebrew words, "Shema Yisrael," meaning "Listen Israel." "Listen Israel, the Lord our God is the one Lord," and it continues with the words just quoted. And yet, there is a certain paradox about today's gospel reading, in that it tells us that love of God is realised by our love for each other.

In other words, our love of God is illusory if it stops short with God, if it does not result in our loving each other, reaching out to everyone without exception, even our enemies. But then, a word of caution, love of neighbour, if it is divorced from love of God, can well become refined self love. For one can easily end up loving others purely for the response one gets from those loved, for the feeling of satisfaction and self-gratification one derives from being generous and kind to them. A Jewish Rabbi, named Hillel, a renowned scholar, a spiritual and ethical leader of his generation, who had a great following just before the birth of Christ, when asked, "Which is the greatest commandment?," gave the famous reply, "What you hate for yourself, do not do to your neighbour. This is the whole law; the rest is commentary."

Jesus, however, stated that love of God linked with love of neighbour jointly form the greatest commandment. Commenting on that, the advice of St Augustine was, "Love God first, and then do what you will," meaning that if we love God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind, then we cannot but be obedient to his will, which wants others to share in that love. St John, the evangelist, who saw all the events of Christ's life on earth in terms of love, and kept preaching about this virtue to the early Christians, to the extent that they became wearied of it, and asked him to talk about something else, St John in his first letter puts it forcibly like this, "Anyone who says, "I love God," and hates his brother, is a liar, for how can a man who does not love the brother that he can see, love God whom he has never seen. So this is the commandment that he has given us, that anyone who loves God must also love his brother" (1 Jn 4:20f).

If we embrace this commandment, if we try and put it into practice, as did the saints, then we will be doing something which is truly radical, which to the non-Christian outsider will often be seen as odd, a seeming contradiction, difficult to understand. These seeming contradictions abound in our faith. For we believe that life comes from death, that gain comes from loss, that receiving comes from giving, and that Christ had to die and come to life again that we might share a new life with him in heaven. We profess to be followers of Christ, who made a complete offering of himself to the Father – "Not my will but yours be done" – who gave his life, his energies, his time in the service of others, who returned to his Father devoid of any earthly goods – the clothes he had worn ceasing to be his before he yielded up his spirit, having being made over by lots into the possession of his executioners.

All this does not imply that we have to tread exactly the same path as Christ. What it does indicate, however, is that our surrender to God does not mean that we retreat into a paradise of unreal spirituality. It means that if we love God, then we have to concern ourselves with others, with the members of our family and community. It means that we must rise above ourselves, and our own interests, and become convinced from Christ's words that St Paul, has given us, that "there is greater happiness in giving than in receiving" (Acts 20:35).

"The world is too much with us," the poet Wordsworth wrote, "late and soon, getting and spending, we lay waste our powers." We pass this way but once, and while we are on our way let us do as much good as we possibly can with our God-given powers, the gifts that each of us has, in serving God and others. But always keep in mind as well the promise of Jesus (Jn 15:5), "Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty," and because of the presence of Jesus, this fruit will last. associationofcatholicpriests.ie