



**Contributed by Father Tim Uniac, C.R.**

Father Tim was ordained in 1986. Over the years Father Tim has served in parish ministry as both Assistant Pastor and Pastor. For a number of years, he worked full time in youth ministry. He has served his religious community as Vocation Director and as Vicar Provincial. He also served his religious community internationally as the Vicar General, residing in Rome for six years. Currently he serves as the Provincial Superior of the Ontario-Kentucky Province of the Congregation of the Resurrection, and as Administrator of St. Agatha Parish, in St. Agatha, Ontario.

**31<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

**October 31, 2021**

**GATHERING TIME**

*(10-15 Minutes)*

### **Introduction to the Word:**

There is a wonderful story I heard many years ago, a story crafted by the author/preacher William Bausch. It is a story that reminds me of the tenth Commandment – do not covet another’s property. I always believed that this meant not to covet someone else’s property, but also to not covet your own property in a selfish way, in other words we are called to share what we have with others in generosity of spirit. The story, in summary, is this: a young boy had just finished his Sunday school class that had dealt with the Last Judgement. In the course of the class, the teacher told the students that, by giving something to another, you are in fact giving to Jesus. On his way home, he passed an elderly lady sitting on the park bench; she looked very lonely to the boy. So, he sat down next to her, took a chocolate bar from his pocket (all through class he had anticipated eating the bar), and offered her a piece. She accepted silently with a smile. He again offered another piece, and she accepted with a smile. They never said anything to one another, they just simply smiled brightly to one another. When the boy arrived home his mother noticed this happy smile on his face, so she asked why. He said, “I shared my chocolate bar with Jesus on the way home, and she has a great smile.” When the elderly lady arrived at her home, her sister noticed the smile on her face and asked why. She said, “I shared some chocolate with Jesus today, and you know, he is a lot younger than I thought”. Do not covet another’s property, nor your own. Share with others—you might encounter Jesus.

### **Warm-up Activity** *(about 8-10 minutes):*

Jesus answers the question as to which is the greatest commandment by citing the call to love God and love one’s neighbour. But what do you say? Which is the most important of the Ten Commandments in your life right now? (In brief, the Ten Commandments) Honour God; Honour God’s name; Honour God’s

Day; Honour your parents; Honour human life; No adultery; Do not steal; Honour the truth; Do not covet another; Do not covet property.

## **The Table of the Word**

### **THEME: Ten Commandments**

A few interesting reflections on the Ten Commandments ... Commandments 1 through 3 are commandments regarding our duties towards God. Commandments 4 through 10 regard our duties towards one another. The Ten Commandments are also known as the “Decalogue”, from the Greek for “10 words”. The Ten Commandments are considered a set of biblical/religious precepts/principles pertaining to worship and ethical living. The Ten Commandments appear twice in the Old Testament, in Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-12. The church views the Ten Commandments as commandments for our own protection. Obedience to the commandments can lead to eternal life, whereas disobedience can lead to suffering and dire consequences.

**Leader:** We turn now to the One Lord, who is the source of all forgiveness and peace.

Lord Jesus, you call us to new life in you,	<b>Lord, have mercy.</b>
Christ Jesus, you call us to love God and neighbour,	<b>Christ, have mercy.</b>
Lord Jesus, you call us to embrace the Ten Commandments,	<b>Lord, have mercy.</b>

**Let us pray (together)**

*You are the One God, O Lord, and besides you there is no other.  
You alone are we to love, with all our heart, with all our soul,  
with all our strength, and our neighbour as ourselves.  
Sharpen our ears to hear this great commandment,  
and arouse this twofold love in our hearts.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

### **SCRIPTURE REFLECTION TIME** (45 minutes)

*(As Christians we believe that the **WORD** of God, we hear proclaimed each Sunday is an empowering word, and that God is present in the word proclaimed. This is the word that God wants us to hear today. The dynamic of the small Christian community, namely, reflecting on our life story within the context of this word, and sharing the insights of these reflections, is such that God’s Spirit becomes present, and the gifts of the Spirit are experienced as empowering and life giving.)*

### **FIRST READING** (Deuteronomy 6:2-6)

Moses spoke to the people: “May you and your children and your children’s children fear the Lord your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long.

“Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in the land flowing with milk and honey, as the Lord, the God of your Fathers, has promised you.

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart.”

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## **SECOND READING** (Hebrews 7:23-28)

The priests of the first covenant were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; but Jesus holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able for all time to save those who approach 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, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself.

For the law appoints as high priests those who are subject to weakness, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## **GOSPEL** (Mark 12:28-34)

One of the scribes came near and heard the religious authorities disputing with one another, and seeing that Jesus answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is first of all?”

Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; 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 neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Then the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher; there is no other”; and to ‘love him with all your heart, and with all your understanding, and with all your strength,’ and ‘to love one’s neighbour as oneself,’ – this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

When Jesus saw that the scribe answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”

After that no one dared to ask Jesus any question.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

**Lectio Divina** means “sacred prayer through sacred reading.” It was a popular form of prayer in the early Church. This word proclaimed today is God's own word, God's way of speaking to you today through God's own Spirit. So take a few moments to be quiet, allowing this word you have just heard to touch you or soak into you as you reflect quietly on the three readings. Is there a word or thought that somehow attracts you or has your interest? If so, simply identify it and describe it in a few words.

## COMMENTARY:

As our liturgical year nears its conclusion, when we will celebrate the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe (or what many simply call “Christ the King”), our Sunday scripture readings focus upon the fundamentals of faith. This focus upon the fundamentals of faith is intentional; by focusing upon the fundamentals, we might better prepare ourselves for the End Times (we explore the End Times on the above-mentioned solemnity). The readings from Deuteronomy and the Gospel will parallel one another, by exploring the basic fundamentals of faith, namely belief in the one God, and love of God with our whole hearts. Hebrews will remind us that the King we will soon celebrate is Jesus the High Priest.

**Deuteronomy.** In this passage, Moses is heard reminding the Israelites about God’s love for them, and their corresponding need to keep the commandments of God in order to reveal/manifest/experience this great love. It is interesting to note that the previous passage from Deuteronomy is a recollection of the Ten Commandments given to the Israelites on the mountain. Moses proclaims today to the Israelites that faithfulness to the Commandments is to be expressed daily. Faithfulness, biblically speaking, is what we know as ‘Fear of the Lord,’ which is, in truth a blending of both trust in, and adoration of God. Perhaps a way to better understand ‘Fear of the Lord’ is to think of it in terms of the veneration, honour and respect we give to our parents – this is akin to ‘Fear of the Lord’. The Israelites, in their daily living of the Commandments, would not consider any of the Commandments negligible. Why? Because the living of the Commandments is an expression of obedience to God’s will; it is what pleases God, and the Israelites considered living life in faithfulness to the Commandments as good for them.

**Hebrews.** This letter compares the priesthood of Jesus with the priesthood of the Old Testament, “*the priests of the first covenant*”. While there are many similarities between the priesthood of Jesus and the priests of the first covenant, there are also many important differences. The priesthood of Jesus is on a whole different level “*because he continues forever,*” while the First Covenant priests die and need to be replaced by new priests. With the death of First Covenant priests, their priesthood comes to an end. Because Jesus “has been made perfect forever,” His priesthood does not die, does not pass away, does not come to an end. Another important difference between the priesthood of Jesus and that of the Old Testament, is that the priesthood of the First Covenant requires that sacrifice be made continually; the priesthood of Jesus does not, for “*this he did once for all, when he offered himself.*”

**Mark.** When asked by the scribe which commandment is first, Jesus does not turn to religious law in order to answer the question, but rather Jesus quotes from the *Shema* prayer, a prayer well known to pious Jews: “*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; 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.*” Sound familiar? That’s because it is almost verbatim from the first reading today from Deuteronomy. Combine this love of God with love of neighbour and you have one of the most basic tenets of our faith!

Allow 5 – 10 minutes for the participants to react to the **commentary** to identify a newly discovered insight.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

### Deuteronomy 6:2-6      *“Fear the Lord”*

When you hear the phrase “fear of the Lord,” what immediately comes to mind? Do you perhaps see this as actual “fear”, in that you are afraid of God and any possible punishment? Do you perhaps see this as a call to venerate and honour God – to stand in awe of God? Do you perhaps see this in some other way?

### Hebrews 7:23-28      *“A Son who has been made perfect forever”*

The priesthood of Jesus, our great high priest, was established through His one-time offering of self upon the cross – He made this sacrifice for our sins. We look upon this sacrifice as an element which leads us to identify Jesus as “perfect”. Jesus calls us to sacrifice ourselves as well in the service of others, and while we cannot attain the same level of sacrifice that Jesus offered, we are still called to sacrifice in the service of others. What does our sacrifice in the service of others look like?

### Mark 12:28-34      *“Love your neighbour as yourself”*

This basic element of our faith, to love our neighbour as we love ourselves is, if we are honest, not as easy as it sounds. What does it mean to love ourselves? Who is my neighbour? Can you love someone whom you despise or hate? What kind of love are we talking about? Can you love someone who is truly evil? Is forgiveness the same as love?

## CARING-PRAYING TIME: (15-20 minutes)

1. **Word of the Week:** *“For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest”*

2. **Suggestion for the Week:**

Spend some time this week reflecting upon what can best be described as the **magnitude** of Jesus’ sacrifice upon the cross for me.

- a) As you sit and reflect upon this amazing gift Jesus freely gave us, what emotions does this evoke within you?
- b) What, if anything, does this gift call you to?
- c) How do you thank Jesus for this awe-inspiring gift?

**3. Intercessions:** (Response: **Lord, hear our prayer**)

**Leader:** To the Lord our God, let us pray through Jesus our high priest, who forever lives to make intercession for us.

For all who reverence the Lord, the God of our ancestors: May we diligently keep the commandments and grow in mutual respect, we pray to the Lord ...

For the gift of peace for our children and our children's children: May a love based on justice multiply greatly in this and in every land, we pray to the Lord ...

For those displaced from ancestral lands by violence and discord: May society grow in respect for the unique cultural heritage of others, we pray to the Lord ...

For those who are sick and in need of God's healing and comfort: May we be instruments of God's love for them, we pray to the Lord ...

For the dead whose lives bore witness to Jesus' commandment of love: May they enter into the land of promise that flows with the milk and honey of eternal life, we pray to the Lord ...

**How can we help you in prayer this week?**

**Let us pray** (together)

*Continue, O Lord, to bless us with the grace to listen,  
that our hearts, our minds and our senses  
may be open to receive the Word that saves,  
the gospel of Jesus Christ, our high priest,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God for ever and ever, amen.*

**With hands and hearts united in gratitude for God's favours today, we pray that all those in our influence be moved to be open to your Word and your Spirit, while we pray as one,**

**OUR FATHER ...**

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