

We believe... We love...

I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Dt 30:10-14)

¹⁰Because you will **obey the voice** of the LORD, your God, **keeping the commandments and statutes** that are written in this book of the law, when you return to the LORD, your God, with your whole heart and your whole being.

¹¹For this **command** which I am giving you today is not too wondrous or remote for you. ¹²It is not in the heavens, that you should say, "Who will go up to the heavens to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may do it?" ¹³Nor is it across the sea, that you should say, "Who will cross the sea to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may do it?" ¹⁴No, it is something very near to you, in your mouth* and in your heart, to do it.

THE FOCUS: Heeding the Commandments of God

COMMENTARY

- The Book of Deuteronomy repeats the commandments in the Book of Exodus.
- The Reading reiterates heeding the voice of God // keeping his commandments (v.10).
- V.11 claims God's commands are clear and can easily be understood. Not too mysterious. Not too remote.
- Vv.12-13 follow up the previous verse. You do not need to do the impossible in order to be instructed of God's commands (No one needs to go up in the sky, across the sea to inquire God's will and carry it out).
- The Reading allows no excuses for ignorance of the God's law and for not obeying.
- V.14 indicates the closeness of God's command to the mouths and hearts of the Israelites. Just do it!

REFLECTIONS

The First Reading gives importance to listening the voice of God, translated into keeping his commandments.

According to the Reading, the commandments are simple. We are not excused from not doing them. They are readily known to us. They are accessible to us. God's commandments are already implanted in our hearts and minds.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 69:14, 17, 30-31, 33-37)

**TURN TO THE LORD IN YOUR NEED,
AND YOU WILL LIVE.**



SECOND READING (Col 1:15-20)

Identity of Jesus (expressed in the verb "to be")

^{15*} ^hHe is the image* of the invisible God,/ the firstborn of all creation./

Prepositions

¹⁶For in him* were created all things in heaven and on earth,/ the visible and the invisible,/ whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers;/ all things were created through him and for him./

Identity of Jesus

¹⁷He is before all things,/

Preposition

and in him all things hold together./

Identity of Jesus

¹⁸He is the head of the body, the church.* / He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,/ that in all things he himself might be preeminent./

Prepositions

¹⁹For in him all the fullness* was pleased to dwell./ ^{20k}and through him to reconcile all things for him,/ making peace by the blood of his cross* / [through him], whether those on earth or those in heaven.

THE FOCUS: The Primacy of Christ

COMMENTARY

- The text is about the primacy (pre-eminence) of Christ. All other beings find their existence and meaning in and through Christ.
- Notice the alternating use of verb "to be" (in the 3rd person singular) and the preposition with Christ as its object.
- **CJ's identity:**
 - Image of the invisible God (v.15).
 - Firstborn of all creation (v.15).
 - He is before all things (v.17).
 - Head of the body (v.18).
 - The beginning (v.18).
 - The firstborn of the dead (v.18).
- **CJ as object of prepositions:**
 - In him were created all things (v.16).

- All things were created **through** him and **for** him (v.16).
- In** him all things hold together (v.17).
- In** him all the fullness was pleased to dwell (v.19).
- Through** him to reconcile all things **for** him (v. 20).
- Blood of his cross (**through** him).

REFLECTIONS

Jesus Christ is the reason for the existence, subsistence and purpose of all created things and human beings.

Jesus as firstborn of creation. (He precedes all creation. He was there when all things were created.)

Jesus as the firstborn of the dead. (He is the first to resurrect from a violent death, that gives life, a total and supreme sacrifice [Lazarus rose but had no direct effect on our salvation]).

The Christian must be intelligent enough to make necessary conclusions from what has been said of Christ and make relevant responses.

GOSPEL READING (Lk 10:25-37)

²⁵ "There was a scholar of the law (*who could it be? Certainly he is a scribe*)^{*} who stood up to test him (*he asks a question with a wrong motive. Will he learn from Jesus with this kind of disposition?*) and said, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life (heaven)?" (*as if you earn your way to heaven, not through the merits of Jesus*)[†] ²⁶Jesus said to him, "What is written in the law (*Torah, 613 mitzvot*)? How do you read it?" (*Jesus knows also how to ask questions. As a good teacher, rabbi, he facilitates the answer. He wants that the answer comes from the scholar himself. Here Jesus does not take offense at this testing. He entertains him.*)

²⁷He said in reply, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." (*The scholar's answer comes from Deut 6:4-6 and Lev 19:18.*) ²⁸He replied to him, "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live." (*Jesus gives approval to his perfect answer.*)²⁹But because he wished to justify himself (*Irritating! His purpose is to show himself to be righteous, acceptable to God. He's doing well. All-knowing attitude*), he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" (*He is bent on testing Jesus by introducing another topic. Jesus does not embarrass him just the same.*)

³⁰Jesus replied (*The Parable of the Good Samaritan*), "A man fell victim to robbers (*like Barabbas or the two thieves crucified with Jesus*) as he went down from Jerusalem (*mountain*) to Jericho (*plain, near Jordan River*). They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead (*semi-patay*).³¹ A priest (*highest religious leadership*) happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. (*He did not help the poor guy. A priest! Maybe he is tired already, just came from the service at the Temple*)³² Likewise a

Levite (*from the tribe of Levi, no land assigned to them during the time of the Judges, lay associate of the priest*) came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. (*The law did not allow these people to touch the dead to avoid contamination or ritual impurity [Lev. 21:1-3,11; Num 19:11-16]. From the Jewish point of view, they were doing the right thing.*)³³ But a Samaritan traveler (*foreigner, enemy of the Jews, not expected to show sympathy to them*) who came upon him was moved with compassion (*with all his heart and being*) at the sight (*The Samaritan had feelings. Very human! He used his right brain. The priest and the Levite used their left brains.*)³⁴ He approached the victim, poured oil and wine (*ancient medication*) over his wounds and bandaged them (*with all his mind*). Then he lifted him up (*with all his strength*) on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him. (*The Samaritan acted upon his feelings. He concretized them to save the victim*)³⁵ The next day he took out two silver coins (*denarii, two days wage*) and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, "Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back." (*The Samaritan did more than expected. Outpouring of support! He supported up to the finish. His help was total, not half-hearted.*)

³⁶Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers' victim (*Jesus' question changes the meaning of "neighbor," not the victim, but the Samaritan*)?³⁷ He answered, "The one who treated him with mercy." (*Yeah, you're right!*) Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." (*This time the scholar has no more question. He should imitate the good Samaritan. Did he do it? If he did it, wow, a big conversion! His change defies personal, religious, historical and cultural conditionings. He did not become a Samaritan, but an intelligent follower of Christ.*)

THE FOCUS: Who is my Neighbor?

REFLECTIONS

Jesus is a good teacher, even to the scholar who has no good motivation. Jesus takes all opportunities to teach those who can understand, even to those who at one point are misguided.

Luke, the author, was a teaser. He induced the scholar to acknowledge his enemy (the Samaritan) a hero in the story. It is a no no to the Jews to admire the enemy.

II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR HOMILY/SHARING

The First Reading talks about keeping the commandments of God. The Second Reading talks about the role of Jesus in our existence and salvation. His identity cannot make

us escape from him. If he is the boss and reason for our being, then we have to take him seriously, his commandments. The Gospel Reading talks of the commandment of love of God and neighbor.

How to develop your sharing/homily

Tell a story on how you follow instructions. Sometimes, often times, it is hard to follow them. It is cumbersome to understand rules and follow them. We want to follow our own rules. We want to simplify them or do our own thing. In the process, we do not deliver what is expected of us.

Filipinos are fond of not following instructions. They find pleasure in violating rules and regulations and getting away with them without being penalized.

The First Reading is emphatic on **heeding the commandments** of the Lord. The Israelite must learn the commandments since childhood. The fathers must instruct their children of the ways of the Lord.

If we dig deeper into the theology of the Old Testament, we keep the commandments because it is part of our being **covenanted** with the Lord. The covenant (Yahweh is our God; we are his people!) defines through the commandments how we should relate ourselves with God and with one another. Without the **covenant**, heeding the commandments is meaningless.

With God, we cannot dictate our own terms. God exacts obedience to his commandments. What happens if we do not follow any precept? We live in chaos. We become rugged individualists (individualistic) disconnected from one another.

We cannot form a community, a family. We do not live according to our dignity as **covenanted** people.

God does not exact obedience to the commandments for its own sake; keeping the commandments is for our own good and benefit.

For the Israelites, if they heed God's laws, they will keep the promised land. They will enjoy God's protection. They will not be driven away from home. (*Read the whole book of Deuteronomy.*)

Now if we love, it must be total. God demands complete love from us. "Love God with all your soul and heart."

We must not withhold anything from God. We must love with our whole being, with all our energies, attention, devotion and wisdom. We must not ignore (pass by) our neighbors, the victims of social injustices, social maladies.

We must not invoke the "law" as an excuse for not doing anything for the victimized. We need to stop in order to respond to the needs of our brethren and to sacrifice our time, our energy and some of our resources.

The Samaritan was cool in helping. He knew what he was doing. He was practical. He took responsibility to the unknown person. He did not find the victim "istorbo or dagdag sa trabaho (annoying and burden)."

Again we take a look at the concrete steps the Samaritan had taken:

The Good Samaritan (vv.33-34) 1) *approached the victim*

(no qualms, no fear of violating any law); 2) *poured oil and wine* over his wounds (he did not think his supply might go low on his long journey. Confident and unafraid). 3) And *bandaged them.* (with care and affection and sensitivity). 4) Then he *lifted him up* on his own animal, (with his strength, again with care so as not to break his bones) 5) *took him to an inn* (checked him in with deposit) 6) and *cared for him.* (assured him of his support, tried to bring the hot towel and the bed pan).

The Samaritan, though a traveler, was prepared, equipped to help.

Wanted Good Samaritans in our society and church and in our homes who will bind up our wounds.

The story of the Good Samaritan is craftily related by Jesus.

We cannot miss Jesus' point. He is a good, experienced teacher. He was there already before the beginning of creation.

We should follow his teaching on how to attain eternal life.

In our communities and parishes, we should not act like "robbers."

We rob the cellphones or other belongings of our unsuspecting brothers and sisters in the meetings.

We rob their schedules and their zeal to serve. We deprive them from doing their duties and responsibilities, invoking our rights to be there always.

We reserve spaces and times exclusively for us.

We become *cordon sanitaire* to the pastors so that other people would not approach them.

We do violence also to our co-workers if we talk against them, or if we are not kind to them in our words and deeds.

If we want to attain eternal life, we must follow Jesus and keep his commandments.

We must act like the "Good Samaritan."

The eucharist strengthens us in our commitment to love God and neighbor. The eucharist is a sacrament of love, communion and compassion. Jesus is here to bind up our wounds if we have been victimized. He is here to teach us to take care of the poor victims.

We are a covenanted people. The eucharist is our new covenant with the Lord. In the eucharist, we start living in heaven here and now.

-Prepared by Fr. Cielo Almazan, OFM

III. OUR CONTEXT

1. Neighbor, therefore, is not defined by space. How is it defined then?

2. Recount a moment when you became a neighbor to a person. How?

3. What Parish Programs do you attend to develop your neighborhood? Share with others. (HM)