

31st Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

In my homily for All Saints Day on Friday, I spoke about the desire to be a saint. From the place of having the desire to be that, though, you will probably ask, “How do I specifically, tangibly live out that desire; how do I go about putting it into practice?”

Jesus provides you with the total answer in today's Gospel:

"The first [of all the commandments] is this: You shall 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 shall love your neighbor as yourself.

There is no other commandment greater than these."

If you use these 2 greatest commandments to guide your choices, your actions, your words, your discernments, you will progress toward conversion of life, and a life that is the life befitting a saint.

From major life-path choices, to everyday interactions between you and another person, to choices of entertainment, you can apply these commandments to determine what is right to choose.

Something like this: If I seek to love God with **all** of my being, then that will direct my actions, decisions, words, choices, and when I think “Should I take part in ____, should I join ____, should I watch or listen to ____, should I advocate for ____, should I say ____, should I etc.,” then I will have the answer to these questions every time by asking - does said choice, action, decision, or words strengthen my loving of God with my whole self, or does it divide me between love of Him and love of something else? Does it make me more like Him, or less like Him, less holy? Does it draw me closer to Him, or away from Him?

If the answer to any of those is ‘divided from him, less like him, away from him,’ then it's a choice failing the greatest commandment of God, and is to be avoided.

The second great commandment, flowing from the first, helps you in discerning too.

Along with asking, “Does choosing/saying/doing _____ strengthen or weaken my union with Christ; will said thing strengthen or weaken me

actively loving God as completely as possible” we must also ask “Is choosing/saying/doing _____ an act of loving my neighbor?”

But you may come to places where you think “I don’t know if choosing this is or isn’t loving my neighbor,” especially because the people in our world proclaim a lot of things that are nonsense and error as being loving.

When you encounter a place where you don’t know if an action or behavior toward another would be loving or not, that is when we turn to specifics provided by our faith that help fill out these two great greatest commandments. Just a few of those specifics are the Beatitudes, the 10 Commandments, the Spiritual Works of Mercy, the Corporal Works of Mercy, the Church’s teachings on the dignity of marriage, on rightly ordered sexuality and purity, on the value of life from beginning to natural end.

CCC, ask a priest.

From all eternity, God has desired you be like him so that you can be *with* him. The first part in becoming like him is to desire sanctity, holiness - that’s what holiness is, becoming more like Him and being filled with less of what He is not and what is opposed to Him.

And His 2 greatest commandments are the guide for how to discern holy behaviors and choices of action in desiring to be a saint:

Does it increase your union with Christ and make you more conformed to God?

Does it increase or contribute to you loving your neighbor?

When both of these are truly in the affirmative, then we progress on the pilgrim path toward conversion of life and sainthood.

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

There is no other commandment greater than these.”