

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Mar 8th 2024

Listen to him!

Today's text presents Jesus in the temple, where he was asked by a scribe a theological question: "What is the most important commandment?" The scribes had discovered 613 commandments in the Torah, and the question was: Of these 613, which one is the most important?

Many teachers maintained that the most important of the commandments was the observance of the Sabbath because God himself observed this, as he rested on the seventh day after six days of creation. But Jesus had disagreements with the Pharisees regarding the Law of the Sabbath.

Contrary to what the scribe expected, Jesus cites the creed of Israel, which is given in the Book of Deuteronomy, Chapter 6: "Hear, O Israel!" Jesus gives a new way of understanding our relationship with God, where the first command of the Lord is "Hear, O Israel" – ie., "Listen, O chosen people of God". We are God's chosen people and must listen to God's Word and allow it to transform us. Hear O Israel, Adonai is our one God ... if you listen to him, you will keep his word."

"Love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your life, with all your strength and with all your mind." Our entire life project has no other objective than to fulfill the mission entrusted to us on earth – to do the projects of God. And we do not do this because of any compulsion but rather out of the love of God, who has designed our life.

The Pharisees had asked for the most important commandment, but Jesus gave us two commandments: "To Listen" and "to love". Then he teaches us that the love of God is not possible without loving our neighbor.

According to Luke's version of this passage, there is only one commandment: 'Love God and love your neighbor as yourself'. In the Gospel of John, in chapter 15, Jesus says: "This is my only commandment: 'love one another.'" In the letter to the Romans, Paul says: 'All the commandments ... do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, they are summarized in these words: you will love your neighbour as yourself.'

How are we to live by this commandment of Jesus? First, Listen to him! To listen to the voice of the Lord, we must resolve to travel with him on the road from Galilee to Jerusalem.

Reading Mark's Gospel is equivalent to making this journey. It may be that having reached the last page, and one does not yet dare to offer one's life to Jesus. There is no need to be discouraged because of this; we must start all over again, starting again from Galilee.