

Third Sunday of Lent

In recent years the Ten Commandments have become an unusual staging ground for various groups within the Church. Some people complain that young Catholics don't know them by heart. This position is countered by those who say that rather than being able to recite them we should live them, though it's hard to see how we can do one without the other. Still, others rightly claim that Jesus summarized them in his new commandments, "To love God with all our heart, mind, and soul and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves."

So by putting some ancient words into the modern vernacular we are exhorted this Sunday to seriousness, facing reality, humility, creating space, respecting age, honesty and fidelity, and we are bluntly told to stop killing and stealing. There is nothing old fashioned about these challenges. As in other instances, we can see that it's not what our tradition has to say but the way we say it that can be the problem.

And today's Gospel tells us of the consequences of moving away from these guiding principles. I think we need to take Jesus' anger very seriously. Rightly we have emphasized the love and compassion of Jesus over recent decades because for far too long the steadfast love of Christ was under-emphasized. We should never think, however, that it cancels out the anger God feels when he sees an unjust world filled with people who know better and do nothing.

God has given us the Ten Commandments, the Law, the Prophets and Jesus his Son, so that we might know the Way, the Truth, and the Life. When we are called to account for how we spent our lives, whom we loved and how we made the world a better place for all, most of us will not be able to plead ignorance. May our Eucharist this Sunday enable us to be mindful of what the Ten Commandments say, but even more may it give us the courage and strength to live them out in a world that needs witnesses to them more than ever.

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