

THE LORD'S NEW COMMANDMENT

Rev. Allison. L. Nicholson

Lesson: John 13

At the Last Supper, the night before His crucifixion, the Lord spoke of the importance of keeping His commandments five separate times. "If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love," He said. Time and time again, throughout the Old and New Testaments, the Lord speaks to us about the necessity of keeping His commandments. "You are My friends," He tells us, "If you do whatsoever I command you."

The Lord was referring to the Ten Commandments which He had given to the Children of Israel shortly after their escape from Egypt. However, by the Ten Commandments, all things of the Word and all things of the Church are meant. For when we fail to keep one commandment, we fail to keep them all. When we commit a sin against one, we commit a sin against all of them.

The first commandment is that, "You shall have no other Gods before Me." This is the first and most important of the commandments. If we truly keep this commandment, we will keep all the rest. This first commandment, "You shall have no other Gods before me," was repeated again and again to the children of Israel in order to impress upon them its importance.

The first three commandments of the Decalogue have to do with our love to the Lord. The last six are concerned with how we should love our neighbor. And the fourth law, which is, "Honor your father and mother," joins together the first three laws of how we should love the Lord with the last six of how we should love the neighbor. The Father whom we are to honor is the Lord, and the mother is the Church.

During the Lord's ministry, as He was teaching, a lawyer of the Pharisees asked Him, "Master, which is the greatest commandment in the law?" The Lord said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment." And then the Lord added, "And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." In other words, if we truly keep these two commandments, then we are obedient to all of the Lord's Word.

The Ten Commandments were given to the Children of Israel by the Lord at Sinai when He spoke to the people from a cloud atop the mountain. Hundreds of years later, when He came into the world as Jesus of Nazareth, the Lord gave

a new commandment for us to live by. It was at the Last Supper, at the end of His earthly ministry, that the Lord said to His disciples, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you." This new commandment does not replace those teachings which the Lord gave before, of course. It is a *new* commandment that helps us understand the others more clearly. The first and greatest commandment is still, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind." This could be called the commandment of our early childhood. As soon as we are able to talk, we learn that the Lord is our loving heavenly Father and that we are completely dependent on Him.

As we get older, we begin to learn the commandment that the Lord said was the second and like the first, that is that we should love others as ourselves. Even when we are quite young, we start to see the need for loving others as ourselves, or at least treating others as we'd like to be treated. For example, you can see this need in playing games, for we all know what would happen if someone said, "everyone must obey the rules *except me*."

The Lord's new commandment to love others as He loves us is more difficult for us to learn and to practice than the two great commandments. To keep this new commandment requires more from us than just saying "I'll do it." Before we can love others in the same way as the Lord does, we have to first understand just *how* the Lord loves us.

The Lord loves us because He created us, and all that the Lord creates, He loves. He loves us because the Lord is Goodness itself, and Truth itself. Each one of you is created in an image of His Good and Truth. Each of you, in a different way, is a form of the Lord's Good and Truth.

Still, we know that there are things that are not good in each of us. We know that we often say and think things that are not true. The things within us that are evil and false were not created by the Lord. These thoughts and ideas come to us from hell, and we invite them into our minds by means of our selfishness, pride and stubbornness. Now what do you think the Lord loves in you? Certainly not the selfishness, the pride, nor the stubbornness, for these things are not the Lord's; they belong to the hells. The Lord can only love the good that He put in you and truth that you learn from his Word. This is what the Lord loves in you. This is why the Lord tells us again and again to keep His commandments.

This is what the Lord meant by loving others as He has loved us. We are to love the good things in others, for this good is the Lord living and working in those people He created.