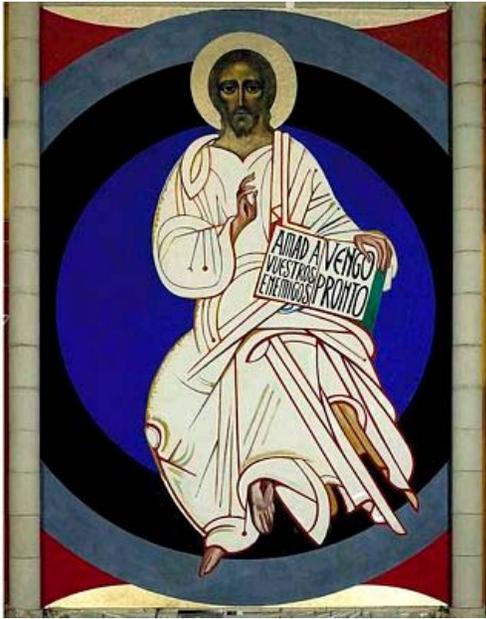


Dear Brothers and Sisters



"If you love me, you will keep my commandments." (Jn 14:15)

What are the commandments of Jesus? Does he mean the Ten Commandments? The author answers in this way:

A legalist reads this backwards: "You will keep my commandments if you love me." In other words, we must prove our love for God by doing what He commands.

But keeping His commands is a by-product of love. To give an example, there are many laws governing the responsibilities of parents to their children. Break any of these laws and you might go to jail or have your kids taken away. It's a serious business. But to be honest, I couldn't tell you what these laws are. I've never read them. Yet I can confidently declare that most of the moms and dads I know are keeping every one of these laws. How do I know? Because they love their kids. They don't keep the laws to show the authorities that they love their kids, and they don't relate to their children on the basis of these laws. They relate to them on the basis of love and keeping the laws of the land flows naturally from that love relationship. They know the laws serve a good purpose, but they weren't written for them. They were written for fathers who don't love their kids.

Contrary to what the legalist may tell you, keeping the laws to earn what God freely offers is a surefire sign that you don't know the love of God. A legalist reads the words of Jesus above and sees a threat. Do the commandments or else! But love makes no threats.

So, what are the commands of Jesus?

In today's Gospel (John 14:15) Jesus is referring to two specific commands, the first is "A new command I give you: Love one another as I have loved you...." (Jn 13:34)

And the second: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me... Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracle's themselves" (Jn 14:1,11)

How can we be certain that these are His commandments? Because John – who was there when Jesus spoke these words – says so in one of his letters:

"And this is His command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as He commanded us." (1 Jn 3:23)

What does it mean to keep His commands? Put it altogether and Jesus is saying this:

"If you love me, you will love one another as I have loved you and your faith in me will lead to miracles like I have been doing and greater miracles still."

Jesus' first commandment is pretty much humanly impossible to keep, while the second commandment is definitely impossible. Impossible for the legalist, that is; but not for the one who is in love.

The great news is that it is Christ who has loved us, even when we were sinners. Knowing, experiencing this love is the only thing that makes it possible for us to love him, and to love others in the same way. May each of us continue to grow in the experience of his love, and may we, as a result, experience the possibility of loving others exactly as they are.

Fr. Sean