

# Great Commandment

God is great, and his command is great; all life, all holiness are his, and in his presence all that exists, all the multitude and variety of being, flows into a sublime unity and harmony -"the peace of God". We use the word "difference" sometimes to mean "conflict". But we should notice that our deepest knowledge of *peace* always involves difference. The perfect complementarity of different things gives us peace. Eggs and bacon, gin and tonic, earth and sky, man and woman, true God and true man...great and small alike, things or persons shine and rejoice when they are coupled, and it is not a business of *pairing*, or finding a match, but about *contrasting*, rejoicing in difference.

## **The Work of our Redemption**

I think we're so bound up in our individuality, paddling our own little boat and keeping our end up and so on, that we miss our way to that complementarity again and again. I'm so keen to make my point, to be heard and taken into consideration, that I lose the plot, the wider view. I need to be governed differently -I need, in short, a *commandment* • to prevent my losing my whole purpose. This is where the great commandment functions in the scheme of things. It expresses the way I can be redeemed from the lonely littleness of my own plan, and liberated into the world of giving, and belonging, to others, where my fish can find its chips (so to speak). If loving another person can help us to experience this redemption and liberation, it is only the love of God which will really turn the key. I think the most famous line Augustine wrote was: *O Lord, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts find no rest, until we rest in you.* Our nature is incapable of fulfilling itself without the infinity of God. A Godless life is therefore a sad, hopeless barking up of wrong trees; there can be no peace without God, and thus our other relationships will always suffer from restlessness until we have found him. So there is an organic link between the two

commandments -loving God and loving our neighbour: keeping the first one is the necessary condition for keeping the second.

## **Command and Promise**

The crude idea of a commandment is that it is a pure imposition by God, who is a kind of appalling cosmic sergeant-major, issuing domineering demands for the discomfiture of his creatures. We should remember that the commandments carry with them the perennial grace of the loving Creator, who not only inspires our ideals, but supplies the power to accomplish them. In life after life, the scriptures and the history of the Church displays the ongoing story of redemption, as people overcome their limitations and display the presence of God. In this sense the commandments are also promises from God. A good trainer lays down goals which seem impossible to fulfil, because the pupil needs to be stretched beyond his present powers. But the regime, if it is realistic, will develop the pupil to the point of fulfilment. In the case of the great commandment, what more could be said in honour of anyone, than that he loved God? Even the uttermost pagan would have to concede that such love is honourable, beside the love of money or the love of power or the love of pleasure. Among loves which might be called generous -the love of a spouse, of one's family, of one's country, of humanity. it is possible to defend the love of God as a higher love than any of these, which must be limited at best to the scale of humanity. Love that asks for human nature to go beyond itself is love on the big screen.

**Seek The Face Of The Lord** Today's entrance antiphon is particularly apt. Like Moses, we are destined to come into God's presence, and to know him. This knowledge will be the fulfilment of all hopes and promises. *Fr Philip*