

Sunday Reading

A Reading from the Gospel of Matthew 22:34–40: The Greatest Commandment

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a scholar of the law tested him by asking, “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart,

with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.”

Focus Questions

1. Who tested Jesus?
2. What did he ask Jesus?
3. What did Jesus say was the greatest and first commandment?
4. What is the second greatest commandment?
5. On what do the whole law and the prophets depend?

Loving or Unloving

Directions: Carefully read each of the following examples and write **Love of God** if it pertains to loving God; write **Love of Neighbor** if it pertains to loving our neighbor; or write **Unloving** if it depicts a situation that lacks love.

1. Going to Mass on Sunday. _____
2. Going to Confession. _____
3. Mowing your elderly neighbor's lawn. _____
4. Telling a friend who is being unchaste with his girlfriend that he is being sinful.

5. Refusing to give money to charity. _____
6. Refusing to pray _____
7. Letting your friend cheat off your test paper, because you know she has bad test anxiety. _____
8. Driving your friend to the abortion clinic because the father has abandoned her and she doesn't have any education or money to raise the child.

9. Serving food at a soup kitchen. _____
10. Being there for a friend when she loses a loved one _____
11. Taking time out of your day to spend in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

12. Getting drunk with a friend to help him cope with his parent's divorce.

13. Sitting with a new student in the cafeteria, and going out of your way to make sure she feels welcome _____
14. Volunteering at a crisis pregnancy center. _____
15. Volunteering and working with AIDS patients. _____

What Is Love?

Directions: Carefully reflect each of the below *Catechism* and Scripture passages on love. As you read, try to come up with your own definition of love as it relates to the readings. Finally, discuss the following questions as a class.

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

1822 Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.

1823 Jesus makes charity the *new commandment*. By loving his own “to the end,” he makes manifest the Father’s love which he receives. By loving one another, the disciples imitate the love of Jesus which they themselves receive. Whence Jesus says: “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love.” And again: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

1824 Fruit of the Spirit and fullness of the Law, charity keeps the *commandments* of God and his Christ: “Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love.”

1825 Christ died out of love for us, while we were still “enemies.” The Lord asks us to love as he does, even our *enemies*, to make ourselves the neighbor of those farthest away, and to love children and the poor as Christ himself.

Scripture Passages on Love:

If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, [love] is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. If

there are prophecies, they will be brought to nothing; if tongues, they will cease; if knowledge, it will be brought to nothing. For we know partially and we prophesy partially, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things. At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known. So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13)

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. (John 3:16)

“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” (John 15:13)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust.” (Matthew 5:43-45)

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” (John 14:15)

Above all, let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8)

A friend is a friend at all times, and a brother is born for the time of adversity. (Proverbs 17:17)

For this is the message you have heard from the beginning: we should love one another, unlike Cain who belonged to the evil one and slaughtered his brother. Why did he slaughter him? Because his own works were evil, and those of his brother righteous. Do not be

amazed, [then,] brothers, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers. Whoever does not love remains in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life remaining in him. The way we came to know love was that he laid down his life for us; so we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him? Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth. (1 John 3:11-18)

Discussion Questions:

1. Based on the above readings how can we define love?
2. How does the world's definition of love differ from what is stated above?
3. How can we love more perfectly?
4. How can we bear witness to others through our love?