

Impact

NOVEMBER 2024

BRING FAITH TO LIFE. FIND LIFE IN FAITH.

Love the Lord your God

One of the scribes came to Jesus and asked which is the first of all the commandments. Jesus replied, "The first is this: Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.

With all your heart and soul

We might ask ourselves how the Lord can *command* us to love God - surely love is something to be freely given. While this is certainly true - we are created with the freedom to choose the Lord or walk away from God - it is important for us to remember that **God loves us first**. Our love of God and desire to grow in faith is in **response** to the goodness and graciousness of God, which is so great it cannot be measured nor grasped. The commandments are given to show us how to live as people who recognize God as **Lord alone**, as people committed to put God first in our lives. With this in mind, Jesus tells us **the best response to God's lavish love** is to love in return, with our whole self - heart, soul, mind, and strength. When we love God with all our heart and soul, God is at the very center of our lives.

With all your mind and strength

If the Lord our God is Lord alone, nothing else will hold greater importance in our lives; our daily actions, attitudes, and priorities will reflect our love for God above all else. Yet, how often do we stop to ask ourselves if this is true? **Does the way we spend our time, attention, and money reflect our love of God** or do other things take precedence? How often do we pause for prayer, care for the needs of others, share our resources with our parish and those who are poor? Do we yearn for more things or for God whose loving presence is the greatest treasure of all?

As in all things, Jesus is the perfect model of what it means to love God fully. Jesus placed himself in the loving arms of his heavenly Father, living, dying, and rising in complete communion with him, desiring only to fulfill God's will.

Living as a person in right relationship with God as a follower of Jesus Christ requires us to be **mindful of the Lord** as we discern God's will and rely on the **strength of the Holy Spirit** to fulfill it. At its best, the life of discipleship is single-minded - focused on the way of the Lord.

And your neighbor as yourself

The second is this: **You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.**" Love that is real leads us beyond ourselves, in simple acts of care and kindness, in profound attention in moments of sickness, hurt, and grief. Jesus makes it clear that love of God will naturally be shown in love for our neighbors. There are many examples of Jesus' care for those who were poor, sick, hungry, or dying that show us what it is to follow the Lord's way with our lives. Notice that Jesus says we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. This is no casual invitation to help others when it is convenient for us. Rather, it is a radical call to view the other with the same sort of preference that we give to ourselves or those who are dear to us. In Christ, all are dear, all are precious. Love God. Love neighbor.

"To love God is to live of him and for him, for what he is and for what he does. Our God is unmitigated giving; he is unlimited forgiveness; he is a relationship that promotes and fosters. Therefore, to love God means to invest our energies each day to be his assistants in the unmitigated service of our neighbor, in trying to forgive without limitations, and in cultivating relationships of communion and fraternity." (Pope Francis, 4 November 2018)

Bring faith to life. Find life in faith.

IMPACT THIS MONTH

Take time to make a list of all the gifts and blessings for which you have to be thankful. If the year has been especially difficult, be mindful of the blessing of faith and assurance of God's providential love.

Place your list in a place where you will see it often. Add to it as you recognize small daily blessings; reflect on the ways you may be called to share your gifts with others so they may know Christ's care through you.

Invite family and friends to join you in this exercise of gratitude and sharing.

Share your lists in person, on a video call, or through an email thread. Offer a simple prayer of gratitude together.

Resolve to live as a more grateful person this season, caring and sharing freely with others in grateful response for the gifts that are entrusted to you.

Give thanks

Stewardship begins when we acknowledge that everything we are and have is truly God's. God gives us everything in trust, as a farmer or vineyard owner trusts the steward to care for the plants, nurturing them to yield with increase. Taking this realization to heart, we grow in gratitude, shaping our lives with a sense of wonder, awe, and responsibility. We have been entrusted with much; surely knowing this will make a difference in the way we live.

As with any gift, the appropriate response is to say "thank you." Just as a child learns to take care of the gifts given to him or her on a special occasion, we learn to express our gratitude to God for our many gifts by taking care of them, nurturing them and helping them to grow. We have been entrusted with the gifts of time, relationships, our special talents and skills, the ability to earn income and the resources that result from our work.

Our response to this trust is to be generous, as our loving God is lavishly generous. Gratitude leads to generosity. Good stewards live generously,

selflessly, lovingly, in every time and season. This month, we hear the story in the gospel of Mark about a poor widow who put two small coins in the treasury. Jesus notes that while others had given from their excess, she gave from her poverty. She gave all she had, trusting that God, who is the giver of all good gifts, would provide.

Much of our surrounding culture is focused on the self and the acquisition of money and material possessions. We can easily fall into the trap of seeking security in things. When we place our trust in God, we become free to give, and we give freely. We are more likely to give "no matter the cost to ourselves" because we no longer seek security in things that are ultimately fleeting. In this freedom, our giving – of our time, attention, prayer, faith, money, talents, and resources – is a sign that we are secure in God's warm embrace. Jesus asks us to give, knowing that when we do, we will powerfully experience the freedom of God's love and freely share it with others.

As we gather with others to celebrate Thanksgiving, let us be mindful of all for which we have to be grateful and all we may be called to share in grateful response to God who is the origin of our abundant blessings. May this time and season be one in which we give freely so that others may know Christ's love and presence.



If the only prayer you ever say in your life is thank you,
that will be enough. — Meister Eckhart

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a pen, writing the words "I am grateful for" on a piece of paper. The handwriting is in a cursive, personal style. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the act of writing.