

## FROM THE PASTOR

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?’

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, none of us would be able to name all of these laws. We’ve never read them. Yet we can confi-

dently declare that most of the parents are probably keeping every one of these laws. How do we know? Because most parents 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 relationship of love. They know the laws serve a good purpose, but they weren’t written for them. They were written for parents who don’t love their children.

Contrary to what the legalist might say, keeping the laws to earn what God freely offers is a surefire sign that one does not know the love of God. A legalist hears the words of the Gospel and sees a threat. Keep the commandments or else! But love makes no threats.

What are the commandments 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 miracles 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 as they are.

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