

A Reflection from Fr. Canisius for the Third Sunday of Lent

Dear Parishioners,

As we continue our journey through Lent, today's reading from Exodus enumerates the commandments God's people were to live by as part of the covenant relationship God established with them at Mount Sinai. The first three commandments shape our relationship with God, and the remaining seven shape our relationship with one another. Jesus summarized these with the great commandment: *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.* If we live this dual commandment of loving God and neighbor, we will fulfill the 10 Commandments.

Let's focus on the very first commandment: *You shall not have other gods besides me.* Sounds easy enough. We don't go to some other church to worship the god of rain or the god of fertility as the pagans did back in the day. We only worship God as revealed in sacred Scripture and sacred Tradition.

And yet, is it really true that we do not have other gods besides the Lord God? Because if it is true, then he is the one we seek to please first; whose commandments we seek to obey; the one to whom we turn first for guidance and help; the one around whom we organize our lives; the one who comes first in our hearts.

Each of us loves God. But maybe there are times when he doesn't *really, always* come first. The daily distractions of our lives can end up receiving all of our attention. We may lack energy and might be running low on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and so rather than pray, we watch a show or spend time on social media. Rather than share our faith with a family member, well, we'll find pretty much anything else to do instead. God, and the things of God, seem to take a back seat at times in our lives. Thank goodness we never take a back seat for him!

Fortunately, the Lord is ready to help us. Every time we receive him in the Eucharist, every time we encounter him in the sacrament of reconciliation, the Lord fills us with his grace, cleansing our hearts and strengthening them to resist the temptation of all those attachments and desires that keep us from loving God wholeheartedly. All we need to do is ask; all we need to do is come to him.

Remember to join us for Stations of the Cross every Friday in Lent.

Have a blessed week!

~ *Fr. Canisius*