

LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



A Column by Fr. Tom

We Love God Because He First Loved Us

Last week, we introduced the Ten Commandments as our foundation of holiness, so it makes sense for us to begin our study of the Ten Commandments with those that pertain primarily to God. It also makes sense that we begin with the First Commandment: I am the LORD your God: you shall not have strange gods before me.

When we look at the First Commandment in its “traditional Catechetical formula,” as quoted above, it does indeed seem to be one of the “shall not’s” that we discussed last week. However, when we look back to the original words that were given to Moses from the Lord, we notice something more – a relationship. “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall not have other gods beside me. You shall not make for yourself an idol or a likeness of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters beneath the earth; you shall not bow down before them or serve them. For I, the LORD, your God, am a jealous God, inflicting punishment for their ancestors’ wickedness on the children of those who hate me, down to the third and fourth generation; but *showing love down to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.*” [EX 20:2-6]

We must remember that the Ten Commandments are part of the Covenant that God had with His chosen people. He chose them; He saved them; He wishes to remain with them; He loves them. In this Covenant relationship, God looked out for His people. He is asking them to look for Him first too.

As we move forward to today, the First Commandment teaches us that our relationship with God should be primary in our lives. We all have relationships that we value and find important, such as relationships with a spouse,

children or other family members. What God is encouraging us to do in the First Commandment is to put our relationship with God first, even before these relationships that we value and call important. Last week, we quoted Jesus’ citation of the most important commandment as “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” [MT 22:35] How can we love God with our whole heart, soul, and mind if He is not our first love?

Of course, God is also asking us to ensure that He is more important to us than even lesser things, such as money, power, fame, status, self-love or admiration. These are just some of the “idols” that are alluded to in the quote from Exodus above.

How can we work toward having “no other gods” before the Lord? First, we can do as the Lord asks. Interestingly, obeying the Ten Commandments is a good start in that regard. Also, we should stay connected to the Lord, especially through prayer. For sure, one of the great ways to put God first in our lives is to put Him first in our day. Many people start their day with prayer. Some will start with a traditional “Morning Offering Prayer,” such as the following: My God, I offer you my prayers, works, joys and sufferings of this day in union with the holy sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world. I offer them for all the intentions of your Son’s Sacred Heart, for the salvation of souls, reparation for sin, and the reunion of Christians. Amen.

Obeying the First Commandment by loving God above everything and everyone else is our first step toward growing in holiness through the Ten Commandments.

