

Total Commitment to God Third Week of Lent Friday, March 24, 2017 8:15 AM
Hos 14:2-10; **Mk 12:28-34** (This is the road to happiness and the only one.)

“You are not far from the kingdom of God.”

From time to time there is a concurrence between Jesus’ interlocutors, his questioners, and himself—at times. Sometimes there is an antagonism, but not here. Here there is agreement, and **the agreement is rooted in the word of God as it already was grasped by the tradition, the Torah of God.**

Now **Jesus’ answer** comes from two different parts of the Old Testament, but it is still written Scripture. **The Book of Deuteronomy chapter 6** supplies the first part, the so-called Shema of Israel: “Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone!” This of course is the great claim to the oneness of God, the unity of God. Not only is God alone, there are no others, but this God is worthy of all love and respect. Now it doesn’t say this in the actual text of Deuteronomy, but what could easily be implied is that **God is worthy of all love because God is love.** Actually that is never said in so many words until the Letter of John in the New Testament, but there’s great concurrence here. **We can see how the New grows out of the Old. It’s deeper maybe, but it’s not completely new and different.**

And so this God then is a **God who wants to relate to us in a total sort of way**, involving all of us: all of our mind, all of our strength, all of our heart, all of our emotions, everything, not a little category, a little part of our life, no. In this way God is also called, perhaps you don’t like this word, but God is called jealous. **Jealous means demanding this wholeness.** God doesn’t want to just be part of someone’s life. God doesn’t just want to be a thought now and then. Actually people have sometimes told me that the **only pray when they are in trouble.** This is not the basis of a very good relationship with God, anymore than you would want a friend who only called you

when he or she was in trouble. **You wouldn't consider that a real friend.** But we throw those words around: friend, ally. Our country seems to believe it has all kinds of allies; I'm very skeptical. **Friendship and alliance, which is the basic idea of covenant, is a whole thing. It's a commitment, a total commitment: heart, mind, soul, body, everything.** This is really what God is looking for. This is how the Book of Deuteronomy understands the first commandment. You are familiar with a different formulation found in Exodus, but this is a little expanded, deeper. It gets even deeper when we see this very God incarnate in the person of **Jesus giving himself totally to God the Father in this power of the Spirit,** which is the power of healing, transforming love. **This is the road to happiness and the only one.** The world can go on its way and create all kinds of false gods and will and does and won't stop, but this is the road to happiness, and the only one.

Then of course there is this second part which harkens to the Book of Leviticus: **"Love your neighbor as yourself."** It's all part of the same thing because **when we love God with the wholeness of our mind, the wholeness of our heart, the wholeness of our strength, our neighbor is all included.** Our neighbor must be included. Loving God doesn't divide us from anything. The love of God isn't in any way exclusive, but inclusive, encompassing. So the two go together.

And **this scribe recognized the rightness of all this,** although we have no proof that anybody else ever put the two together, this Deuteronomy law of chapter 6 and Leviticus law of chapter 19. We don't know if anyone ever put them together, but the scribe thought it was perfectly correct. **So there are people among the scribes and the Pharisees who think the way Jesus did, and of course there were those who didn't.**