

Paul and Love of Neighbor
(23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

Romans 13:8-10—Love Fulfills the Law

⁸ Owe no one anything, except to *love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.* ⁹ The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:8-10)

1. Love: “love” (Greek *agapaō*) = to choose good for another
2. The Law = “law” (Hebrew *torah*; Greek *nomos*) (13:8; cf. Exodus 20:1-18)

Tablet 1: Love of God

1. *Idolatry*: “You shall have no other gods...”
2. *Blasphemy*: “You shall not take the name of the LORD... in vain”
3. *Sabbath*: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy”

Tablet 2: Love of Neighbor

4. *Honoring Parents*: “Honor your father and your mother.”
5. *Murder*: “You shall not kill.”
6. *Adultery*: “You shall not commit adultery.”
7. *Theft*: “You shall not steal.”
8. *False Witness*: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”
- 9-10. *Covetousness*: “You shall not covet... anything that is your neighbor’s.

3. Love of Neighbor: quotation from the book of Leviticus:

[Y]ou shall love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18)

The Living Tradition

Thomas Aquinas: [*L*]ove has two acts, namely, the love of God and the love of neighbor... Therefore, it does not seem that one who loves his neighbor fulfills the whole law. *The answer is that love of neighbor pertains to love and fulfills the law, when it is a love by which the neighbor is loved for God. So the love of God is included in the love of neighbor; just as the cause is included in its effect.* For it says in 1 John: “this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also” (1 John 4:21). Conversely, love of neighbor is included in love of God, as the effect in its cause; hence it says in the same place: “if anyone says, ‘I love God’, and hates his brother, he is a liar” (1 John 4:21). That is why in Sacred Scripture sometimes mention is made only of the love of God, as though it is enough for salvation, as in Deuteronomy: “and now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him” (Deut 10:12); and sometimes mention is

made of love of neighbor: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12)... *Thus, even the precepts of the first tablet are included.* (Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Romans*, no. 1049, 1058)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

1. How do each of the two tablets of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 relate to the love of God and the love of neighbor?

2. How does Thomas Aquinas explain Paul’s statement that “love of neighbor” fulfills the entire law, including the first tablet of the Ten Commandments?

For Further Reading

1. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans* (trans. F. R. Larcher, O.P.; eds. J. Mortensen and E. Alarcón; Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute, 2012).
2. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Volume 11 (ed. Philip Schaff; repr.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994).