

The Law of Love

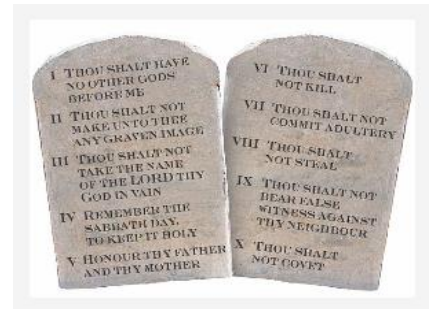
Reflection by Fr. Paul Portland, SDS

Most of the time, when we are reflecting on our lives or preparing for confession, we go through the 10 commandments, the first law that was written on stone tablets. Jesus came into the world to give us a new approach to law, laws written on our hearts: the beatitudes, summarized as the law of love.



The ten commandments represent justice: we act justly when we don't steal, when we don't hurt someone else, etc. If we don't follow them, we could be arrested and punished. That is written in stone.

The law that Jesus brought calls us out of ourselves in love and mercy. If we don't forgive someone, if we don't share with those in need, if we are not accepting of those who are different, if we don't hunger and thirst for justice, etc., we are not hearing what Jesus is saying nor are we following his example.



The parable of the Good Samaritan captures what I am trying to say. This outcast, hated by the Jews, allowed his heart “to be moved with pity” (as we often heard said of Jesus) and helped an injured Jew, while other Jews, following the law, ignored the injured man: their hearts were of stone.

As we start a new year, I invite us to reflect on how we are doing at imitating Jesus by living the law of love. One way to do it is to reflect on the Beatitudes, found at the beginning Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Chapter 5 of Matthew. The ten commandments tell us how to be just; the Beatitudes tell us how to have merciful hearts, as did Jesus. At the last judgment, we won't be asked if we were just or fair, rather we will be asked if we fed the hungry, welcomed the stranger, visited the lonely, and so on. In other words, do we have hearts “moved with pity?”

May God bless you and your family in 2026.

Fr. Paul Portland, SDS



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