

## **Homily for October 31, 2021**

**Next Week is Intention Weekend for the United Catholic Appeal. Like our Parish Annual Appeal, which we just had, the United Catholic Appeal is a time every year to see how we can give to the ministries and services that take place in the name of the whole Archdiocese of Indianapolis. It is treated like more than just a second collection.**

**In-pew commitment cards will be available. One can make one's commitment online at the Archdiocesan website, or using the QR code in the bulletin insert this weekend.**

**Throughout the Archdiocese, there are many organizations that need support, and there are many people in need. A short list of those helped by donations given through the United Catholic Appeal last year includes:**

- **Over eight hundred veterans and over six thousand people with a disability received food, shelter and clothing from the Archdiocese's Catholic Charities agencies.**
- **More than eight hundred homeless families received a safe place to rest.**
- **More than forty-eight thousand people who were hungry were served hot meals.**
- **Nearly One thousand one hundred children in the archdiocesan Notre Dame ACE Academies in the Indianapolis center-city received a Catholic education.**
- **catechetical programs were offered for thirty thousand youths and adults.**
- **Our seminarians in undergraduate and in Theology Seminary received much-needed financial support.**
- **Countless mothers after receiving support chose life for their babies instead of abortion.**

**Each parish is given a "goal" amount to aim for. We have been very good about reaching ours through the years. Ours is roughly about ten percent of what our normal annual collections are. This year our goal is Eighty Thousand, Six Hundred Ninety-four dollars. 694.**

**Thank you for giving to all the worthwhile ministrys and needs that are encompassed within the United catholic Appeal.**

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Nine years ago I read an article from someone name Howard P. Kainz. I inserted it in the pages of my Sunday Lectionary next to this weekend's gospel reading. When I saw it again this past week, I knew it was the time to mentioned it. The title of the article is, The Weirdness of Commanding Love.

The weirdness that one would need to make it a law to love. The strangeness attached to ordering someone to love. That summarizes how paradoxical Our Lord's words are.

How strange it is that love should be commanded of us. No doubt God gave us this command because love is to be the hallmark of His people. Yet is not love something that just comes about? Is not a love that is required somehow less freely given, less real?

To quote one paragraph in the article: "Could anyone, for example, credibly order even their children to love?"

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It reminds me of another thing the Scriptures teach – Fear of the Lord. For example, Psalm Thirty-Four (in Spanish bibles, Psalm Thirty-Three) verse Twelve says: "Come, children, listen to me; I will teach you fear of the LORD."

Some of the ancient Church writers teach us that Fear of the Lord is different from ordinary fear. Ordinary fear does not have to be taught. The terror that comes from danger occurs all by itself. Fear of the Lord needs to be taught. Fear of the Lord is a reverence, a respect, an awe and wonder.

And in the same way, we need to be taught to love, and we need to be commanded to love.

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G. K. Chesterton speaks of the profound accomplishment of Christianity. Where one might naturally water down and compromise on two principles that seem to be at odds, the Christian faith holds both to be at their full strength. One of his examples from his book Orthodoxy goes like this:

**“A sensible pagan would say that there were some people one could forgive, and some one couldn’t: a slave who stole wine could be laughed at; a slave who betrayed his benefactor could be killed, and cursed even after he was killed. In so far as the act was pardonable, the man was pardonable. That...is rational, and even refreshing; but it is a dilution...Christianity came in here [and]...It came in startlingly with a sword, and clove one thing from another. It divided the crime from the criminal. The criminal we must forgive unto seventy times seven. The crime we must not forgive at all...We must be much more angry with theft than before, and yet much kinder to thieves than before.”**

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**If love is reduced to only feelings of affection toward another, perhaps it can seem weird that God has to command us to love. Feelings are out of our control.**

**But Love is also an act of the will. It is a decision. Love is willing the good of the other as other. Not for myself. So to love God is to DO SOMETHING!**

**To love God with all my heart means I need to desire God, talk with God, listen to His word, meet Him in the sacraments.**

**To love God with all my soul means I need to make God first in my life. Make sure the Lord is the beginning and the end of my day – and is one I do not just think about, but talk with.**

**To love God with all my mind means I need to spend time learning more about God, thinking deeply about God, discussing difficulties I have, and develop my ability to explain the faith.**

**To love God with all my strength means I need to intend for each and everything I do in my life to be for His greater glory. Even simply eating and laughing and working and reading and playing.**

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**The weirdness of needing to be commanded to love. If loving God fully and our neighbor as ourselves is not weird – it is because we have been taught well. But we must still do what we have been taught. There will be a temptation to love**

**only the sinner whose sins we can ignore; to pardon only the person whose sin is pardonable.**

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**People have been made to love. People have been made for love. And God, who made us, made us for Him – and God is Love. Letting God’s love flow into us is how we can see others as God sees them. It is how we can love – giving to others the kind of love God gives to us. Our love of God is not private. Love goes out to others.**

**And if loving God fully and our neighbor as ourselves is not weird – it is also because we have had so many good examples of how it is done. The saints.**

**Though we do not have an All Saints Day Mass here at Saint Lawrence tomorrow, let us still remember all their good examples. Many of the saints did not have easy lives. Many of them had to battle the temptation to forgive people whose sins seemed unforgivable. Their allowing God to work through them and their joy in obeying the command to love can light our way when we are not sure it is worth it.**

**May everyone wonder at us, but still recognize us as Christ’s disciples, because we obey the command to love.**