

God is Love (*Deus Caritas Est*) – Pope Benedict XVI – Paragraph 15

[Love can be “commanded” because it has first been given.] This principle is the starting-point for understanding the great parables of Jesus. The rich man (cf. Lk 16:19-31) begs from his place of torment that his brothers be informed about what happens to those who simply ignore the poor man in need. Jesus takes up this cry for help as a warning to help us return to the right path. The parable of the Good Samaritan (cf. Lk 10:25-37) offers two particularly important clarifications. Until that time, the concept of “neighbour” was understood as referring essentially to one's countrymen and to foreigners who had settled in the land of Israel; in other words, to the closely-knit community of a single country or people. This limit is now abolished. Anyone who needs me, and whom I can help, is my neighbour. The concept of “neighbour” is now universalized, yet it remains concrete. Despite being extended to all mankind, it is not reduced to a generic, abstract and undemanding expression of love, but calls for my own practical commitment here and now. The Church has the duty to interpret ever anew this relationship between near and far with regard to the actual daily life of her members. Lastly, we should especially mention the great parable of the Last Judgement (cf. Mt 25:31-46), in which love becomes the criterion for the definitive decision about a human life's worth or lack thereof. Jesus identifies himself with those in need, with the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison. “As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40). Love of God and love of neighbour have become one: in the least of the brethren we find Jesus himself, and in Jesus we find God.

SFO Constitutions – Article 9.1 / 14.1

Article 9.1 *Rule 5* The spirituality of the secular Franciscan is a plan of life centered on the person and on the following of Christ, rather than a detailed program to be put into practice.

Article 14.1 Aware that God wanted to make of us all a single people and that he made his Church the universal sacrament of salvation, the brothers and sisters should commit themselves to a faith-inspired reflection on the Church, its mission in today's world and the role of the Franciscan laity within it. They should take up the challenges and accept the responsibilities that this reflection will lead them to discover.

U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults – Doctrinal Statements/Meditation – pp. 17-18

Doctrinal Statements:

- Revelation is the self-disclosure of the living God and his plan to save us. Revelation shows us that God desires to have an intimate and loving relationship with everyone.
- The process of Revelation took centuries to unfold. God gradually communicated the divine mystery by words and deeds.
- From the beginning, God established a personal relationship with our first parents. After the Fall, he encouraged them with the hope of Salvation by promising them Redemption.
- God's Revelation resulted in a relationship with people that is called a *covenant* in Scripture. Scripture tells us that God entered into a covenant with Noah and all living beings (Gn 9:16).
- Revelation is an act by which God speaks to and forms a covenant people beginning with Abraham. He then chose Moses through whom the divine law was given to the covenant people.
- Through the prophets God prepared the covenant people to look forward to the coming of the Messiah who would bring the salvation destined for all people.
- Revelation reached its fullness in God's Son, Jesus Christ. The Son is the Father's definitive Word. No new public revelation will occur before the final, glorious manifestation of Jesus Christ.
- God's Revelation is transmitted to us by Apostolic Tradition and Scripture.

Meditation:

Jesus Christ is the definitive revelation of God:

Christ, the Son of God made man, is the Father's one, perfect and unsurpassable Word. In him he has said everything; there will be no other word than this one. St. John of the Cross, among others, commented strikingly on Hebrews 1:1-2; "In giving us his Son, his only Word (for he possesses no other), he spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word – and he has no more to say.....because what he spoke before to the prophets in parts, he has now spoken all at once by giving us the All Who is His Son. Any person questioning God or desiring some vision or revelation would be guilty not only of foolish behavior but also of offending him, by not fixing his eyes entirely upon Christ and by living with the desire for some other novelty.

--CCC, #65, citing St. John of the Cross
The Ascent of Mount Carmel, 2, 22, 2-5

Hosea 2:6-20

I will hedge up her way with thorns;
and I will build a wall against her,
so that she cannot find her paths.
She shall pursue her lovers,
but not overtake them;
and she shall seek them,
but shall not find them.
Then she shall say, 'I will go
and return to my first husband,
for it was better with me then than now.'
And she did not know
that it was I who gave her
the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and who lavished upon her silver
and gold which they used for Baal.
Therefore I will take back
my grain in its time,
and my wine in its season;
and I will take away my wool and my flax,
which were to cover her nakedness.
Now I will uncover her lewdness
in the sight of her lovers,
and no one shall rescue her out of my hand.
And I will put an end to all her mirth,
her feasts, her new moons, her sabbaths,
and all her appointed feasts.
And I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees,
of which she said,
'These are my hire,
which my lovers have given me.'
I will make them a forest,
and the beasts of the field shall devour them.

And I will punish her for the feast days of the Baals
when she burned incense to them
and decked herself with her ring and jewelry,
and went after her lovers,
and forgot me, says the LORD.

“Therefore, behold, I will allure her,
and bring her into the wilderness,
and speak tenderly to her.
And there I will give her her vineyards,
and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope.
And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth,
as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.

“And in that day, says the LORD, you will call me, ‘My husband,’ and no longer will you call me, ‘My Baal.’ For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be mentioned by name no more. And I will make for you a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety. And I will espouse you for ever; I will espouse you in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will espouse you in faithfulness; and you shall know the LORD.