

January 20, 2023



Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH CHALLENGING TIMES

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I WILL WRITE MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEARTS

By Father David C. Robinson, SJ

Excerpt from Today's Reading

This is the covenant I will establish with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their minds and I will write them upon their hearts. I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach, each one his fellow citizen and kin, saying, "Know the Lord," for all shall know me, from least to greatest.

HEBREWS 8:10-11

Reflection

From the earliest narratives of the Hebrews, the covenant of the people with God was grounded in much more than the forms and structures of what became the Law that governed the emergent nations of Israel and Judah. There

was always a profound sense of intimacy and heartfelt connection as well. The tender promise found in Hebrews is an affirmation of the tradition, enshrined in Deuteronomy 6 and 30, centuries before—**Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts (Dt. 6) The word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it. See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands (Dt. 30).**

In Hebrews, there is the same covenantal resonance for the people—loving God, following the commandment of love, and writing God’s law on their hearts—**after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their minds and I will write them upon their hearts. I will be their God, and they shall be my people (Heb. 8:10).** The second Great Commandment, from Leviticus 19:18—**Love your neighbor as yourself**—reverberates in the teaching of Jesus in Mark 12 (to a ‘teacher of the law’) and Matthew 22 (to the Pharisees). This reiterated message makes it clear that all the disagreements and arguments about Law, and tradition, and ritual practice dissolve in the face of these two extremely simple, but extraordinarily profound commandments. Love of God and love of neighbor are the root of our faith, our religious communities, and our saving walk with God in the world. The cited texts span some 700 years of emergent spiritual life across cultures, social classes, and linguistic differences.

Something so fundamental to our scriptural and communal identity deserves our reverent attention. Given the turbulence and unrest in our days, it might serve us well to reflect deeply on what it means to ‘love the Lord our God with all our hearts, our souls, our minds, and our strength.’ Drinking deeply of that healing font in our faith lives might urge us onward as we strive to learn the promise and the grace that come with loving our neighbors as ourselves.



Photo by Fr. David C. Robinson, SJ

For Pondering

- What is your experience of loving God? How does that capture your heart? Your soul? Your mind? Your strength?

- In your early walks in faith, what did loving God mean to you?
- In our troubled times, do you feel drawn to love your neighbors as yourself? What might help you in nurturing that desire?

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