

Homily – Archdiocesan Marriage Renewal Mass

September 9, 2016

The Pharisees of Jesus' day were good persons who wanted to live fully in accord with God's law or *torah* – as they understood it. They dedicated themselves to study, interpret, and apply it to every aspect of their lives. They counted 613 different commandments in God's written law and liked to debate which were the most important. So, one day a scholar of the law asks Jesus: "Which commandment in the law is the most important?"

The underlying purpose of God's law or *torah* is to help us establish, maintain, and restore when necessary right relationships with ourselves, our environment, one another, and God. So Jesus quotes first from the Book of Deuteronomy: You shall love God fully, totally, holding nothing back. But then he adds immediately from the Book of Leviticus: And love your neighbor as yourself. These sum up simply but profoundly what God asks of us. Both are necessary. We cannot love God without loving self and neighbor –no exceptions!

Our first reading today recalls that from the very beginning, God did not want an individual to be alone, living in isolation. God created man and woman to live together in marriage – mutually helping and loving one another. As

equals, wife and husband are to look first to the other's well-being – in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health all the days of their lives together.

God's mandate is clear: love one another. But how do you do this? Pope Francis has often given married couples very clear, simple advice. You need to say to one another three phrases every day: may I? thank you, and pardon me. First, **May I?** – do not take one another for granted; do not try to dominate one another. Please. May I? Second, **thank you.** There is so much anger in world today –often in our families and homes. Anger can be like a block of ice – cold, hard. The antidote to melt the frozen anger is gratitude. Thank you. Third, **Pardon me.** In the most loving relationship there are moments of dispute, argument, hurt, disappointment. Often the causes are on both sides. Both sides need to say – daily – I'm sorry! Pardon me.

St. Paul tells the Romans – and us – that we are to observe God's law, to walk in his ways – not those of the world. He adds that love must be sincere, not phony or false. It must come from the heart, from the deepest part of our being. Our affection must be mutual.

Every year we renew our baptismal promises – our covenant with God – at the Easter Vigil. We have an opportunity to make a new start, to recommit

ourselves to discipleship. Today's Eucharistic celebration is a wonderful occasion to apply God's *torah* to our lives. You have come to renew your commitment to marriage with your spouse. May God's blessings come upon each of you and God's Holy Spirit give you wisdom, prudence, courage, and strength to persevere in your dedication to one another.

May Our Lady of Guadalupe embrace you with her maternal love.