

Fourteenth Sunday Ordinary Time

Exodus 20: 1 – 17	Deuteronomy 5: 6 – 21
IV. Honor your father and your mother that you may have a long life in the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you.	IV. Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord, your God, has commanded you, that you may have a long life and prosperity in the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you.

We ended last week with Saint John Paul II implying an important question. He had noted in his Letter to Families, 02 February 1994, that, “All human rights are ultimately ineffective if they lack the command to honor.” We need to ask ourselves: Is honoring another person something we can be commanded to do? Saint John Paul II writes about another virtue, (the virtue of love), as he answers this wise question. He writes, “There are those who think that love cannot be demanded and that it cannot be imposed.” Then he responds in this fashion, “There is some truth in all this. And yet there is always the fact that Jesus Christ left us the commandment of love, just as God on Mount Sinai ordered, “Honor your father and your mother.” We have made an amazing discovery: Love and honor are acts that refer back to God and not to the person who receives the love and the honor! Maybe we do not like the idea of looking beyond the person that is in our presence? Maybe we would like to equate love and honor with justice? In other words, maybe we feel that a person should earn our love and honor or that a person should deserve love and honor based on his or her actions toward us? These ‘likes’ and these ‘feelings’ seem correct and seem to be part of our natural instinct. Now we can see why God must command us to honor parents and why Jesus must command us to love as he has loved us. Love and honor require a faith that, in fact, does look beyond the person. Likewise, deep down in our thoughts we realize that loving our enemies and honoring undeserving parents are more natural to us than is the instinct for strict justice. Pope Benedict, in his book God is Love, writes, “The pursuit of justice must be a fundamental norm of the State.” Then he warns us, “Love will always prove necessary, even in the most just society....The State which would provide everything, absorbing everything into itself, would ultimately become incapable of guaranteeing the very thing every person needs: namely, loving personal concern.” (See §26 and §28b) Love and honor are at the core of our created being and thus are to be commanded by God as a revelation of our true being and as a revelation of the deception of sin!