

DON LUIGI GUISSANI

The Ten Commandments, the foundation of what Moses lays down in that 1STR from the Book of Deuteronomy, are basically two: *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and strength* and *Love your neighbour as yourself*. As the religious historian Friedrich Heiler points out, these two commandments are found variously in every one of the world's major religions. Indeed, what God our Creator revealed on Mount Sinai is a natural law He has hardwired into every human heart: that to reach happiness we must have a real relationship with God and a real love for other people. St. Augustine put it well when he said: *The human heart is restless until it rests in God*. But this Divine, vertical love cannot stand alone. For human beings are essentially social and so we're also called to love God in others, and to love others as we love ourselves. Jesus of Nazareth shows us the Way. For He is both the Perfect Human Being but also God the Word made flesh, our Saviour.

I'm very happy to welcome you today as we offer Mass for the repose of Don Luigi Giussani on the tenth anniversary of his death. For those unfamiliar, Fr. Giussani was an extraordinarily influential and inspiring priest from Milan. Ordained in 1945, he taught in the seminary and in various high schools, and the author of many books, he founded a new movement, at the time associated with Catholic Action, called *Gioventu Studentesca*, Student Youth. Today, it's known as *Communion and Liberation* and, amazingly successful, communities of CL can now be found throughout the world. Indeed, I'm delighted CL is active too in our Diocese of Portsmouth: please ask Fr. Pepe afterwards for all the details. Its communities meet regularly to study the Scriptures and the thought of Fr. Giussani, thus helping their members apply the Gospel to daily life and to grasp what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, today.

In the Gospel Jesus said: *You must be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect*. This of course is the message of Lent, a call to conversion: *Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel*. But in yesterday's Gospel Jesus said *If your virtue goes no deeper than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven*. To be a disciple, it's not enough to be free from sin: after all, many pagans are good people. More is required: we need to love. To be perfect is to be like God, self-transcending, someone who sacrifices himself or herself for the other, who loves God and loves people. The story of the Old Testament is that unaided humans cannot do this, and so to liberate us from sin, suffering and death, God sent us a Saviour. We need His grace. We need the Person of Jesus Christ. We need communion in His Church. We need His Word and Sacrament, above all the Holy Eucharist. For it's only in communion with Him that we can reach the liberation we need and the TGLHH&F for which we long.

They are happy who follow God's law: we sang in the Psalm. In this Mass, let us pray that our Lenten works of prayer, fasting and charity will renew us and help us practice in our lives the natural law: love of God and love of neighbour. Let us thank God too for the inspiration and example of Fr. Giussani and pray for his repose. We pray for the flourishing of CL here and across the world, and for that communion and liberation for which we all long. Indeed, let us pray for that *new ardour* the new evangelisation requires, so that all around us may find their way to Jesus Christ, the New Adam, humanity's Lord and Saviour.