



Theology Corner

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Theological Reflections by Paul Chutikorn - Director of Faith Formation

“Why Should We Obey the Commandments?”

This is not a typical question to consider because we would usually say, “Well, because God tells us to.” But I think it is most helpful when we understand why it is that we do what we do. In Catholic theology, it is common that we talk about the relationship between faith and reason and how reason is so important for us as humans who, by nature, seek to understand things. This is partially why we say that we have a faith seeking understanding. So, we know that God asks of us to obey His commandments. But does he do this simply as a way to bark orders at us, or is it something deeper? Being that God’s very essence is love, we know that there must be something more to it. He created us out of pure love, in His image, so that we can both know and love Him in return. He gives us the law so that we can have a guide by which we know how we ought to live. In other words, by giving us the commandments, he is revealing to us how it is that we can ultimately have more freedom. Seems paradoxical to say that we must be given laws so that we can have freedom, right? Well this would be due to an incomplete or entirely incorrect understanding of true freedom. True freedom could not consist of doing things that are bad for us, or being held down by inordinate addictions which destroy our peace. Freedom is ultimately the peace we have as a consequence to living as we ought to live.

Taking this into consideration, we can see that God loves us so much that he does not leave us to fend for ourselves. Instead, He reveals to us His divine will so that we know what it takes to be happy. We often get into the habit of wanting to do whatever it is that want to do, but doing whatever we want to do is actually detrimental to our freedom because it causes us to fall into a disordered love for material goods, and makes us live in a self-serving way that is not at all how we were created to be. Remember, God is the Author of nature and for this reason, we should have complete trust in His plan for us. He knows what is best for us, and if we understand this concept with greater clarity, we can then see why we should never want to do *our* will, but instead to always do *His* will. Obeying the commandments leads to true peace and freedom whereas disobeying leads to chaos and destruction. Essentially, obeying the commandments on a consistent basis keeps us in a state of sanctifying grace, while disobeying them places us in a state of mortal sin where we are separating ourselves from a life with God. When we cooperate with God, we are accepting His gift of grace and thereby participating in His divine life that He unceasingly extends to us, particularly in the Sacraments. In doing so, we enter into a covenant with God and resolve to give our whole selves to Him knowing that He also gives His life to us and quite literally gave His life for us on the cross. Why do we obey the commandments? Yes, because God asks us to. But also, because doing so sets us free.