

GOD COMES 1ST

PRAY AND LISTEN ROSARY FOR PEACE

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GOD COMES FIRST

THE GREATEST and FIRST COMMANDMENT

by Msgr. Joseph A. Cirrincione

The idea of the GOD COMES FIRST campaign was suggested to me by a meditation on the Fifth Joyful Mystery of the Rosary.

For a long time, I was puzzled by Our Lord's reply to Mary's mild reproach: "Son, why hast thou done this to us? Behold thy father and I have been seeking thee sorrowing," when He said: "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business (or in my Father's house)?"

Then one day it struck me that what Jesus' answer really amounted to was: "My Heavenly Father comes first". He was already training Mary for the important role she was to have in the plan of redemption.

Mary was a good pupil. For, as St. Luke tells us: "His mother kept all these things carefully in her heart." (Luke 1:51)

After that, whenever I came to the fifth decade of the Joyful Mysteries, invariably the words came to mind: "My Heavenly Father comes first". The transition from those words to GOD COMES FIRST was easy and inevitable. If God came first with Jesus, He surely must come first with us.

Reflection on GOD COMES FIRST let me to do a little research. I began with Matthew 22:34 where in answer to a question about the great commandment put to Him by a doctor of the Law, Jesus answered:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself".

So the greatest and first commandment is to love God with our whole being.

But further research revealed that with Jesus, love of the Father and doing the Father's will were inseparable, synonymous. For He said to the Apostles at the Last Supper: "But he (the prince of the world) comes that the world may know that I love the Father, and that I do as the Father has commanded me". (John 14:31)

He required the same proof of love from the Apostles, for on that same occasion He said to them: "If you love me, keep my commandments". (John 14:16)

So, GOD COMES FIRST began to mean to me, not only must we love God with our whole being but we must seek His will above all else, as Jesus did. This is really the greatest and first commandment. I decided to read the Gospels with a view of finding out how often Jesus spoke of doing His Father's will or urging others to do so. Here are some of the instances I came across.

In John 4 we read of the encounter Jesus had with the Samaritan Woman at the well. The Apostles had gone off to a nearby village to purchase food. On their return they besought Him to eat, whereupon He replied: "I have food to eat of which you do not know . . . My food is to do the will of him who sent me, to accomplish his work".

In the next chapter of St. John, Jesus is in Jerusalem contending with those who not only rejected His teaching but were seeking already to put Him to death. Among the things He said in His own defense was: "My judgment is just because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me".

In the sixth chapter of St. John, we have Our Lord's famous discourse on the "bread of life", in the course of which He said: "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me".

In John 8, Jesus is back in Jerusalem once again, hounded by his adversaries. And again, His defense is the perfect union He enjoys with the Father, saying at one point: "And he who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, because I do always the things that are pleasing to him". (John 8:29)

And what does He ask of His followers? When He taught them how to pray, He said they should say: "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven". (Matthew 6:9)

Lest they forget, in Matthew 7:21, Jesus tells His disciples: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven' but he who does the will of my Father in heaven shall enter the kingdom of heaven".

He makes this recommendation even more emphatic when He uses the occasion of His mother and relatives coming to speak with Him, to say: "Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother". (Matthew 12:50)

And when a woman from the crowd cries out: "Blessed is the womb that bore thee and the breasts that nursed thee," He replies: "Rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it". (Luke 11:27)

But perhaps the most impressive of all the utterances of Our Lord in this regard was that in Gethsemani, when, bathed in a sweat of blood at the thought of His impending ordeal, He prayed: "Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; yet not my will but thine be done". (Luke 22:42)

(To be Concluded)

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