

GLIMPSE

The Big L-Word

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Most of the famous Ten Commandments are easier to understand than practice. Once I learned what it meant to "covet" the last two of them became more interesting. My brothers and sisters and I certainly kept holy the Lord's Day and every other day by honoring our mother and father even when we wanted to kill each other, in retaliation of course. We figured out that "adultery" was pretending we were adults by wearing our parents shoes and hats when left alone to our own vices and devices.

The one commandment which boggled my mind and still rumbles through my soul is the one about loving God more than loving anything or anyone else. I remember trying that once, really tried when I was learning about "The Commandments". I was in St. Rose of Lima Church in Milwaukee all alone, just God and me. I know I had accomplished well the other nine, at least as I understood them, but this first one must obviously be the most important. So I tried and tried, so fervently that I eventually wet my pants! So much for loving God! I knew God wasn't going to be too pleased at that incident at all. So I snuck home through back alleys quite full of shame and wondering just what God wanted from me.

I gave up trying to love and trying to figure out what love meant until I met my first girlfriend in high school. It was that experience which taught me that loving has no easy definition or explanation. What I did learn was that I had funny feelings when with her or thinking about her that were totally opposite anything that had to do with God and God's wanting those feelings directed toward 'Up-There'. I knew I wasn't going back to St. Rose any more when I could spend time with her. Now I never said the big L word to her, that would be way too much and I wasn't accustomed to praying that word to God either. That L-word was in my inactive vocabulary. I would do things to make her laugh, crazy gifts, surprises, the L-word was a doing and her acceptance of my displays seemed to be what she was saying instead of the L-word as well. That relationship did not last very long. I guess she wanted more than a sideshow. Oh well.

What does God want!?!? God wants to be all that God is as God. We hold that God is the big L Word in total, nothing more. This L-Word cannot be seen and that is quite difficult. We can maybe, quite possibly love a concept or idea or image, but our capacities to love are limited by what we can experience sensibly. So we can

say that we love God, because of creation and creatures and especially by those who love us. It is easier to love faces and limbs and voices that smile and kiss. I do know some people who try so hard to feel love for the invisible God that they almost have a spiritual hernia. They feel as I did back at St. Rose, not quite enough, not really fulfilling the First Commandment. If they, or we, do not do that one well, then what is the use of doing the others?

Now it is an avoidance of the issue for me to say, "Well, if I can't love God with all my heart, soul and mind, then I'll love my neighbor and that'll have to do." On second thought, loving my neighbor seems more impossible than loving God. Oh well, what's a guy to do? This, I believe, is how I have answered the big L-Word issue. I have been loved well in my life and what I most have learned to is to allow the other to be who they are and so receive who they are and how they share their love for and with me. I think God wants to be God and wants me to be me and receive both gratefully. Receiving love is the beginning. The reception and the reverencing and the sharing of that love continues that love which has no conclusion.

So my first girlfriend has found another whose love she has received well. I still do crazy surprises and give gifts, but not too strenuously. I believe those who love God have been humbled by their inability to love God above all. They have been reduced to the dignity of receivers. Not a bad way to solve the big L-word. It is only a glimpse, so keep your pants dry.