

31B

Once upon a time there was this doll made entirely of salt. It earnestly desired to know the ocean. Having journeyed thousands of miles it finally came to the object of its desire - the sea. It was fascinated by this strange moving mass quite unlike anything it had seen before. "Who are you" she cried out to the ocean. The sea smilingly replied, "Come in and see". So the doll waded in. The further it walked into the sea the more it dissolved. It slowly disappeared bit by bit and as it was about to disappear completely, it cried out with joy: "Now at last I know the sea".

If we want to know God, who can be described as an ocean of love multiplied to infinity, we must allow love of self to be dissolved in the sea of His love. Remember that hymn we used sing years ago which made a similar point; 'lose yourself in me and you will find yourself, lose yourself in me and you will find new life'

Losing ourselves in Christ is doing His will and we do His will by keeping His commandments. In today's gospel Jesus says that love of God and neighbour underpins all the commandments. But for that to happen we have to go beyond the mere letter of these directives and capture the spirit. Even though the commandments are by and large negative in tone, read in the light of the gospel, they launch us into positive action. In the Confiteor at the beginning of Mass we repent not just of the things we did wrong but also the things we failed to do or live up to. If we overlook this, then I'm afraid the salt doll never really leaves the shore.

For instance, 'thou shalt not steal' calls on me to be a more giving sort of person all round – not just with my goods but with my time and talent as well. The sixth commandment not just forbids adultery but makes couples more aware of the need to become one in mind and heart. The third commandment, to keep holy the Lord's Day, means more than just going to mass – I'm also required to spend

quality time with my family on Sunday and not just use the day to catch up on a backlog of work. That's hardly keeping the Lord's Day holy. The same applies to the other commandments.

Jesus challenges us to go beyond the mere call of duty and love God and neighbour the way He loves us when he laid down his life for us. We go that extra mile with people without them having always to ask. When it comes to love in the gospel sense, we are prepared to be dissolved like the salt-doll. If we are tempted to give in and only do what we're mandated to do'; then the salt doll hardly enters the ocean at all and we'll never really know God.

In the Mass we celebrate God's love for us. At Holy Communion we become immersed in Christ, so much so that we re-echo St Paul's words; 'it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me'.