

## 30A

*There is this story about a Jewish Rabbi who was in prison. It was a rigid regime and he barely had enough food to survive. Being a very orthodox Jew he stuck to the letter of the law in everything. Each day, when he got his meagre fare of food and drink, he went through all the ritual of washing before eating using up most of his daily allowance of water in the process. Luckily for him he got out of the prison in time. Another short while and he would have died of thirst - all of his own making.*

We know the Pharisees were sticklers for the letter of the law, which Jesus felt uneasy about. Today they put him on the spot. For Jesus the law of love takes precedence over love of the law. It should be the same for us especially in reference to the Ten Commandments.

The Third commandment says that we must keep holy the Lord's Day. Attending mass is part and parcel of being a catholic Christian, but does our participation in the Mass empower us to live more selfless lives like Jesus who laid down his life for us.

Again, I love my neighbour and fulfil the sixth commandment by being faithful to my spouse but the relationship may be just coasting along going nowhere. Marriage is more than peaceful co-existence. When a couple celebrates the Sacrament of marriage they are stating that their love for each other is based on Christ's love for His Bride, the church which involved self-sacrifice. In Christian marriage the husband and wife promise in so many words to lay down their lives for each other.

I could keep the seventh commandment by never having stolen from anybody which fulfils the letter of the law, but there is more to it than that, like giving without counting the cost, giving until it hurts. Where in a scale of one to ten would I rank myself in the field of generosity? Remember the Lord's words: 'the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given back'.

Coming to the fifth commandment, I know I've never ended anyone's life but have I done or failed to do anything which may have adversely affected the quality of their lives. When Jesus dealt with the marginalised people of his day, he didn't just follow the crowd but went out of His way to give them a new lease of life and restore their dignity as children of God.

Many people may feel so disaffected with life that they want to end it all. We know there is great concern today about the high number of young people, particularly men, who end their own lives. That happened to one of the priests ordained with me. Loving my neighbour means more than refraining from doing them any harm but being there when they need me the most and when the going gets rough reassuring them that no problem, howsoever large, is insurmountable.

*If I stick to the letter of the law love for my neighbour is wearing a bit thin. Following the spirit of the law, particularly the Ten Commandments I'll have risen to new heights in loving God and my neighbour.*