

### 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 - a bit like today where over a million people, including babies, are at grave risk of running out of food and water while the world looks on. Back to the Jewish Rabbi. Being very orthodox 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 according to Jesus meant they had their priorities upside down. 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 inspire us to live more selfless lives after the example of Jesus who laid down his life for us.

Again, I can outwardly fulfil the sixth commandment by not being unfaithful to my spouse. But 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. In Christian marriage the husband and wife make promises to lay down their lives for each other. Likewise, the priest by foregoing marriage promises to lay down his life for his people.

I could keep the seventh commandment by never having stolen which fulfils the letter of the law, but there is more to it than that, like giving without counting the cost. In a scale of one to

ten how many points would I award 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 added to the quality of their lives or just put up with them. When Jesus came across marginalised or ostracised people in his day, he didn't just leave them in the lurch but went out of His way to satisfy their needs and reinstate their innate dignity as human beings. Examples would be Zaccheus, Mary Magdalene, the Samaritan women, the ten lepers, the man born blind and many more.

So 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 just stick to the letter of the law, my love of neighbour 'when weighed in the balance will be found wanting'. In following the spirit of the law, particularly the Ten Commandments I'll have proved my worth as a genuine Christian and be an inspiration for others to follow suit.*