

Love never remains the same

No relationship does

If we want our relationship with another to strengthen and grow

We have to nourish them

They require constant care and attention

**Married couples: is your relationship the same today as the day
you were married?**

No, and as children grow into young adults to adults

Their relationships change as well

With their siblings and with their parents

It is one constant in our lives

Nothing remains the same

The same is true in our faith lives

Both on the individual level

And on the overall level of a Church or a parish

There are some basics that are like thread in a garment

That thread can change colors as it ages

And sometimes it needs to be patched

**We see this when we contrast the Old Covenant and the New
Covenant**

The Law contrasted with Love

Problems arise when we look at these from an *either / or* perspective

When we really are to see it as *both / and*

One does not cancel the other

But rather builds upon what was

Today Moses speaks of the law

Central for any Israelite to understand God

Not only does the law come directly from God

Written on stone tablets

But it is written on their hearts

There is no need to seek out a teacher

Someone whose career depended on study of the law

Who will go and get it for us?

Who will teach us what it means so we can carry it out?

It does not come from a foreign land

It doesn't need to be interpreted

Eventually this came to be the problem

In Christ's time, the book of the law contained over 600 laws

Each one meant to be fulfilled if you wanted to be a faithful Israelite

Not even the Scribes and Pharisees could know all of them

The man-made law replaced the God-given law

Moses insists that his people know what God requires

The problem lies in living according to the law

Without the loopholes

In his letter to the Colossians, St Paul helps us grasp who Christ is

As an image of God

Christ is not just a visible expression or a symbol of God

He is the manifestation of God

He is not firstborn in time

He is firstborn in preeminence over all of creation

He is the one through whom everything else was created

His existence is beyond all creation, including angels

He is the head of the body, the Church

We often interpret this as belonging to the Catholic Church

But this was from before the Church as we know it existed

The Church Paul speaks of includes our church today

But it goes beyond this and extends to all of creation and all time

Through the blood of his cross

He is the agent of redemption for Adam and Eve

Throughout the ages until he returns

He is the love of God covered with skin

This is one of the best known episodes in the Gospel

Contrasting the old and the new

The scribes want to test Christ

Trip him up

So they ask: *'What must I do to inherit eternal life?'*

The lawyer proves he knows the law

He can recite it all day long

Quoting scripture left and right

But he doesn't know how to live it

He wants the loopholes

Who is my neighbor?

So Jesus tells this story

Contrasting the priests and Levites

The champions of the law

With that of an outsider

One supposedly ignorant of the law

The priests and Levites were Temple personnel

In charge of ritual purity

If they touched a dead person they would become unclean

They had their social standing to be concerned with

Then the Samaritan comes along

An outsider, despised by the Jews

He has no reason to help

But he has compassion

The same emotion Jesus felt for the widow at Nain

The same response of the father of the prodigal son

This love, this compassion urged him to act

The lawyer has asked about works and was told to love

The Samaritan simply loves and does good works

He cleans the wounds

Places the man on his mule

Brings him to an inn and pays for his care

The Samaritan doesn't just speak about love

He shows us what it is to be a loving person

And he challenges the lawyer and us

Go and do likewise

So we ask the same question as the lawyer

What must I do to inherit eternal life?

We have heard Christ's answer

How do we live it?

We know the commandments

Honor your father and mother

Who is my mother?

What about honor and respect to the authority of the Church?

We see we need authority

But this pope is too liberal for me

The last one was too conservative for me

This bishop doesn't know what he is talking about

I can respect them in general

But not in the particular, concrete persons here

Love your neighbor as yourself?

Sure, again easy to do in general

I can support the missions

I can call others to forgive

But what about the one down the street

The one that hurt me

When the offenses get personal

The generalities of the law get lost in the concreteness of the offense

When the Gospel challenges us in a personal, concrete way

We leave the scribes behind in finding loopholes

The priest and the Levite in our Gospel were not evil men

They were not vicious

They would probably agree that it is good to help another

But when the opportunity came to live what was taught

They avoided it lie the plague

The Good Samaritan teaches us otherwise

To be a good Christian

To be a good Catholic is practicing our faith here and now

With my spouse and children

With my parents

With these people in my community

With friends and strangers

Even when they have hurt me

We don't need to travel on a pilgrimage

We don't need to study theology for years

Christ became man to show us that the basic tenants of the law

Could be fulfilled and lived in love

The principals of salvation are universal and for all time

The path is concrete and personal

Who is my neighbor?

How do I live this?