

Our readings today point to our covenant relationship with God  
God initiated this covenant  
Originally with the Israelite nation  
Now with us  
The mediator of the covenant is Jesus Christ, the eternal High Priest  
The essence of the covenant is love

Our reading from Deuteronomy is toward the end of Moses life  
He is giving final instructions to his people  
He knows he will not enter the Promised Land  
But they will  
How will they remain there?

*Hear o Israel*

*The Lord is our God*

*The Lord alone*

*Therefore you shall love the Lord*

*Your God*

*With all your heart*

*With all your soul*

*With all your strength*

*Take to heart these words I enjoin on you today*

This is the most fundamental of all his teaching  
They are called to keep it close to their hearts  
Hung as a pendant from their forehead  
Inscribed on their doorposts  
Even today in Jerusalem  
You will find this teaching inscribed on little scrolls attached to  
door jams of hotel rooms

Many orthodox Jews have phylactery boxes strapped to their forearms

Like a football player

With all their plays written on cards on their wrists

This is their playbook for eternal life

When these words are lived

When this teaching is truly taken to heart

All the rest Moses taught is kept

Not as a command

But in love

But like all of us, confusion arises

How do we live this?

For the Jews, by the time of Christ

It came down to the law

613 direct laws governing their day

For some, a belief that the law would save them arose

Or others, the law protected their position in society

Some of the laws were heavier or more serious

Others less so

And it was the job of the scribe to tell the difference

So when a scribe comes to Christ with this question

*Which is the greatest commandment?*

It was like an expert coming to a novice for their opinion

But he must have seen something in Christ

In his teaching that convinced him Christ could help him understand

But Christ doesn't turn to the author of the law for an answer

He doesn't go to the law or commandments

He does not give us a list forbidding us certain things  
It is not about crossing a well-defined line or action  
It is not about what we know as sins of commission  
It is about a sin of omission

*Love the Lord alone*

*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart*

*With all your soul and with all your strength*

And he adds

*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*

How do we do this?

If he had told us do not do this or that

Do not commit murder or larceny

Do not commit adultery or use the Lord's name in vain

For Jews; do not eat pork

Keep holy the Sabbath

For Catholics: do not eat meat on Fridays

This is what we want as humans

Because we can see the line

We can see when boundaries are crossed

We like these so we can see when we cross over

But we like them so we can see when our neighbor has crossed over

Because then we feel good about ourselves

But this is not where Christ calls us

All these things are included in his teaching

*Love the Lord your God*

*And your neighbor as yourself*

This is perfect love

This is the love Christ has for his Father

It is the love he has for us  
This is the love behind the cross  
Jesus was not commanded to offer his passion and death for us  
He offered it out of love  
Freely given to God  
It is ours to accept or reject

This sacrifice of Christ was offered once in time  
And continues to be offered in heaven  
In God's presence, outside of time  
It is the duty of the High Priest to offer sacrifice  
Before Christ, the priesthood was limited to a familial line  
The Levitical priesthood in the family of Levi  
But Christ is the eternal high priest  
The only priest  
He chose to become man  
To take our nature onto his divine nature  
Offering himself in his human nature  
His priesthood remains forever  
In the line of Melchizedek, with no beginning or end  
And he chose to extend his priesthood  
Through those whom he chooses ---  
Unworthy and beset by human weakness as we are  
In ordained ministry  
So when we say  
*'This is my body' or 'Your sins are forgiven'*  
It is not the human person doing these things  
It is Christ acting in us

**This is why the sacraments are not dependent upon the holiness of the priest**

**They depend on the holiness of Christ**

**It is beyond any human being to perform the sacraments**

**They are efficacious only because we align ourselves with Christ  
And with his Church**

**Hear O Israel**

**Hear O Diocese of La Crosse**

**Hear O men and women of Prairie du Chien**

**This call is not from men, but from God**

**He calls us still today**

**It may be through human means**

**But it is His voice resounding in our hearts**

**We are called into a covenantal relationship with God**

**A personal relationship with our Creator**

**The One who counts every hair on our head**

**The One who, like the sun**

**Enlightens our days and warms our hearts**

***The Lord is our God, the Lord alone***

**And to strengthen that covenant he sent his only son**

**Jesus Christ, the eternal high priest**

**And so he could continue to touch our hearts and souls**

**He left us the sacraments**

**And he left us the priesthood**

**The ordained ministry through which he continues to act in the world**

His power shining forth through our human limitations and weakness  
So we can continue to call out  
*The Lord is our God, the Lord alone*

The Church is a family of saints and sinners  
And we bounce back and forth between these poles  
We have one more command  
*Love your neighbor as yourself*  
Don't just love the saints  
Don't just love those sinners you happen to agree with  
Love your God  
Love your neighbor  
These two are everything  
If we do these, we have no need for anything else  
Because they will be kept in love

And just one final word on everything that has been said about  
the upcoming election  
Let divine love be your guide  
Love of God  
Love of all God's children  
If we do this, from the city council to the president  
Our nation can become a light to the world  
And the Gospel of life will reign