



PO Box 271227 + Flower Mound, TX + 75027 + 1-800-803-0118 + www.dritaly.com

Hear Oh, Israel!

by: Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio



A nice hotel in Jerusalem looks much like a nice hotel in just about any other city in the world but for one thing. At the entrance of each room there is a small metal cylinder called a mezuzah that protrudes from the doorjamb. It contains a tiny scroll containing a verse from this Sunday's first reading: "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, and with all your strength."



A few verses later, the author of Deuteronomy says that this command is so important that it should be repeated constantly, hung as a pendant from our foreheads, even inscribed on our doorposts. Hence the mezuzahs in the Jerusalem hotel, and the phylactery boxes that pious Jews strap to their forearms and foreheads, even to this day, as they pray at Jerusalem's western wall.

So the Lord Jesus was not doing anything particularly new when he underlined this famous verse as the most important commandment. True, he did connect this with a verse from Leviticus 19:18 "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." It may be, though, that another rabbi paired these two commandments before him.

But there is something that Jesus did regarding these commandments that no one managed to do before him. He actually kept them.

Some, like the rich young man, had managed to keep a good many of the other commandments, like thou shalt not steal or thou shalt not commit adultery. These commandments prohibit a certain kind of evil activity. They set limits that cannot be transgressed, boundaries that are well-marked. To violate these commandments mean stepping over the line, engaging a *sin of commission*.



PO Box 271227 + Flower Mound, TX + 75027 + 1-800-803-0118 + www.dritaly.com

With the two commandments in today's gospel however, it is not about engaging in a forbidden activity or crossing a well defined frontier. It is a positive command of loving like God loves, wholeheartedly, completely, every minute of every day. The sin forbidden here is a *sin of omission*, of failing to carry out a positive obligation that binds us at every moment. It's not just about some visible activity, but the hidden motivation of each and every activity. For a sinful human being, fulfilling this commandment is much more difficult than refraining from larceny, fornication, or pork sausage. In fact, it is positively impossible.

**24
Hours
A
Day
7
Days
A
Week**

So forget about the nonsense that "I deserve to go to heaven—I love God and am a decent enough person." Sorry, but God has given you everything. Justice requires that you should not just give a "nod to God" in weekly church attendance and grace before meals, not just avoid murder and burglary. You are obliged to ardently love and serve God 24/7. Neglect to do so for a moment and you've done an injustice to God and deserve to pay the consequences.

Fortunately, however, Jesus lived every moment motivated by perfect love—for us and for God. He even preferred torture and death to reneging on his commitment to fulfill these two commandments. By his obedience, he won eternal life for himself and all who belong to him, crediting to their account what he himself earned by his own blood, sweat, and tears.

And this perfect yet merciful high priest continues to live for us, ever at the Father's right hand interceding for us. He prays for mercy, that the Father would look not at our sins and the consequences that they deserve, but rather at the cross which Jesus endured that those sins would be wiped away forever. Yet He also prays that His Spirit would be poured out on us ever anew, empowering us to love with greater and greater intensity, with fewer and fewer interruptions, exceptions, and limitations. For He did not die simply that His love would be credited to our account. He poured out his blood so that it would run in our veins, that we could love with His heart. For man it is impossible. But with God, all things are possible.



This was originally published in the Nov 5, 2006 edition of Our Sunday Visitor as a reflection upon the readings for the 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B. (Deut 6:2-6; Ps 18; Heb 7:23-28; Mk 12:28b-34). It is reproduced here with the permission of the author.



[The Seven Deadly Sins -](#)

This dynamic 3 talk set is a **BEST SELLER!** Have you ever wondered what exactly the Seven Deadly Sins are? Dr. D'Ambrosio will shed new light on them and he offers practical life-changing suggestions for keeping the Deadly Sins at bay!

[Seven Deadly Sins 3 CDs - \\$24.00](#)