In today’s first reading from the Book of Deuteronomy (DT4:1,5-9), Moses implores the chosen people to hear the statutes and decrees which he is teaching them to observe, that they may live, and enter into the Promised Land.

The 10 Commandments are just as valid today for us today. We need to observe them that we may inherit the Promised Land, eternal life with our loving God.

1. I am the Lord your God: thou shalt not have strange gods before me. I pray that in this time of a global pandemic, we may all give greater attention to placing God as a priority in our lives and that we may recognize the things we do that sometimes put God in 2nd or 3rd place.

2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. We are created in the image and likeness of God. Our ability to speak and communicate is one way we express that likeness. May we always use our tongues to give glory to God.

3. Remember to keep Holy the Sabbath. As Christians, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus every Sunday. It is a mini-Easter. In addition to prayer with our neighbors, God is ever present in the liturgy in a way that He is not when we pray on our own. I know many our suffering as a result of the suspension of the Mass as we seek to limit the spread of the coronavirus. May our longing for the Lord at a distance make our return to celebrating as a community all the more joyful. May we never take for granted the great gift of our loving God in Holy Communion.

4. Honor your father and mother. Please take time to reach out to family members and check on them. We are called to love our neighbor as ourselves and so this commandment also extends beyond the immediate family to all of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

5. Thou shalt not kill. The precautions that we are taking to stay at a distance from one another are so that we do not transmit the virus to one another. Please pray for health care workers on the front lines of stopping the spread of the virus. Like soldiers in battle, they risk their lives that we may enjoy the freedoms we so cherish.

6. Thou shalt not commit adultery. In the Book of Hosea in the Old Testament, the prophet had an unfaithful wife. The wife represented the nation of Israel which was unfaithful to God. In the present day, one might look at our own nation and question how closely we resemble the unfaithful nation of Israel. God sends us prophets to help us recognize our sinful ways both as a nation and as individuals. One may even see in the virus threat a sign that we need to pay more attention to God and really work for the common good of all.

7. Thou shalt not steal. We are a nation blessed with wealth in so many ways while many struggle below the poverty line. Let us recall that all we have is a gift from God. We are his stewards. If we are blessed with wealth, then it is incumbent upon us to share that wealth with others. When we do not, when we hoard and use those gifts selfishly, we steal from the poor.

8. Thou shalt not bear false witness against our neighbor. Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life.” No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6) Let us cherish the truth especially with respect to our neighbors. Or as my parents used to teach me, “If you don’t have something nice to say, then you don’t have anything to say.”

9. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife. Jesus teaches us that “Everyone who looks at a woman lustfully, has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Mt 5:28). Let each of us practice the virtue of modesty and never think of using another person for our own selfish means. Christ offered his life on the cross to purify his bride. Let us model his behavior so that the virtues of temperance, chastity and self-control help us to tame sinful passions.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s goods. The adult Catechism teaches us that “When Jesus began the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-12), he proclaimed the 8 Beatitudes as the way to authentic happiness. The first of these stated that poverty of spirit would enable us to inherit the Kingdom of God. In other words, the first step on the road to joy begins with a healthy detachment from material goods.

Unable to preach to you in person at daily Mass, I offer these thoughts as a virtual homily. Jesus summarized the commandments as love of God and love of neighbor. In these difficult and trying times, let us remember each other in prayer and look for ways to reach out and love one another despite the social distancing.

Peace,

Fr Ross

3/18/2020 Wednesday of the Third Week of Lent.