

## The Purpose of Life

What is the purpose of life; what is its goal? Is that not what the Scribe wanted to know when he asked Jesus, in the gospel reading of a few weeks ago, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" (*cf Mark 12: 28 et seq., Gospel reading of 31<sup>st</sup>. Sunday, Cycle B*) Jesus replied, "The first is this: Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." No 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, or even 99.9 percent loving of the Lord satisfies. Nothing less than 100 per cent is required and is enough.

November is the month of the Holy Souls in Purgatory. Purgatory is about getting those in that state up to loving God one hundred percent - with all their heart, with all their soul, with all their mind, with all their strength. One does not love God one hundred percent if one's will is infected with even the tiniest taint of selfishness. Those in heaven - the angels and saints - love God one hundred percent. One does not get to heaven - see God face to face, enjoy the Beatific Vision of God - until one is totally purified; until one loves God one hundred percent; until for one "The Lord our God is Lord alone."

In the Gospel reading of Tuesday of the 31<sup>st</sup>. week, Cycle B (*Nov. 8 last*), Jesus was emphasizing this one hundred percent requirement of love of God (he is God) when he said, "If anyone comes to me without turning his back on his father and mother, his wife and his children, his brothers and sisters, indeed his very self, he cannot be my follower." Certainly he was not speaking literally. We must love ourselves. Loving oneself is not selfishness. We must love our neighbor as ourselves. Our loving them is not alien to nor diminishes our loving of God. It is an integral part of our loving God. Not loving others is incompatible with loving God. To the extent one is selfish, to that extent one holds oneself as one's god, one's lord, to that extent the Lord our God is not Lord alone.

The purpose of life is to love God one hundred percent. To get to the point of doing so is a most challenging and life-long task. Only by cooperating with the grace God gives us can we do it. We must do it. "Get up! Let us be on our way!" (*Mt. 26:46*)