Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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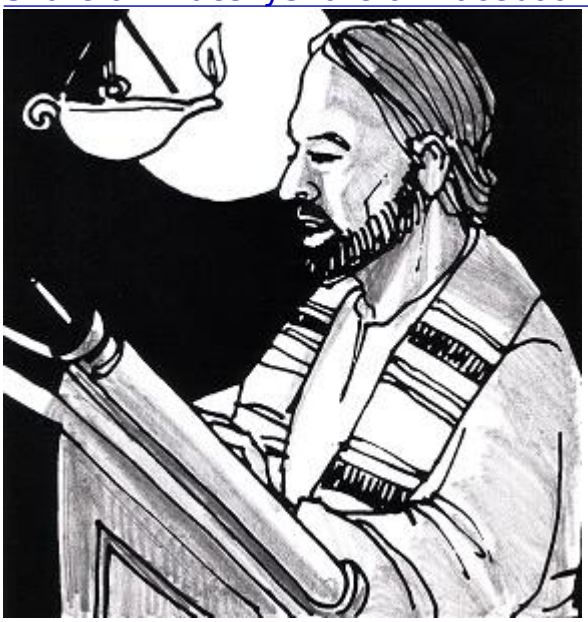

“Whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the Kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:19).

Dt 4:1, 5-9; Mt 5:17-19

Jesus, whose Kingdom was not of this world, knew the power of tradition and institutional religion. In today's Gospel, he affirms the value of keeping the commandments and respecting the traditions.

In the first reading for today from Deuteronomy, Moses makes obedience to the commandments the foundation of the covenant God formed with his people when he brought them out of Egypt and made them a nation.

The covenant based their lives on the memory that God had rescued them from oppression, and they were to treat others with the same justice and compassion they had received. At the time of Jesus, the temple in Jerusalem and the scrolls of Scripture kept in every synagogue represented the ongoing fidelity of the people to the covenant.

Every human institution that has lasted has likewise tried to enshrine itself in stone and founding text and to transmit its values through education and cultural formation.

Yet it seems clear that symbols alone are not enough. Sacred texts and impressive structures are meaningless unless the principles they espouse are enacted. The true expression of any tradition is a living person who is honest and just. Institutions that fail to live up to their own ideals are undermined at the foundations and can erode and crumble in times of crisis.

For Jesus, the test of the tradition was loyalty to the spirit of the law and obedience to the essence of the tradition, which was a living relationship of love with God and for neighbor.

The disciple must be imbued with the spirit of love and at the same time grounded in the teachings of the faith. A single faithful follower of Jesus is a living stone and a sacred scroll in the community of faith.