

## COMMITMENT: THE ELEVENTH COMMANDMENT

One of my favourite Beatle songs is “All you need is love.....” And love, as most people would agree, is a very important part of any relationship. But equally important is commitment.

Commitment comes from a Latin word meaning: “to bring, join or to combine into one whole; to connect, or to unite.” We need to be committed to someone or something to make us whole. So, basically, it seems that love and commitment is what life is really all about. As it has been said: “Tell me what your commitments are and I will tell you what kind of life you lead. Tell me what you think is important and I will tell you what kind of person you are.” Scary but true. If we think about it, commitments do define us no matter what stage of life we are at. We become what we are committed to and without these commitments in our lives, life can sometimes be a struggle.

Jesuit priest, Fr. John Haughey said that commitment “is at the core of the mystery that everyone is.” A commitment, whether it is shallow or deep, is the foundation of any genuinely loving and meaningful relationship. For love to grow and last the pace, commitment has to be there too. Commitment is easy when everything is going along OK. But when times are tough, which they all can be from time to time, then it is commitment that helps carry us through.

It is similar in some ways to making New Year resolutions. We commit to lose weight, take up a hobby, learn a foreign language, do a course in first aid, etc. Then we ask ourselves: “Why am I doing this? I’m the one who runs from commitments, who has trouble learning, who has a sweet tooth, who panics when I have to stick to something....” The answer to that question is: We’re doing it because we decided to make that commitment.

Probably the biggest and hardest commitment we ever make is when we look beyond ourselves and reach out to someone else. It is only in these personal relationships that self-giving, co-etre and innateness become more meaningful. Commitment, therefore, is primarily a people thing.

In a marriage, for instance, commitment is made in the spirit of forever. It means that if we have to, we can be selfless enough to put our partner’s needs before our own. It means we’ll be prepared to hang in there through thick and thin. Perhaps that’s why it is the sad trend today for the majority of young people to embrace de-facto relationships and delay marriage until they’re older, if at all. Many say they do not want commitment or they are not ready for it. They are quite happy to become involved with someone as long as it does not take away their sense of independence.

Unless a person is solidly committed, they sign on the dotted line in pencil only! But then down the track there may come the time when they will have to either erase or write in ink. That's the whole point of commitment. If they decide to write in ink, they automatically cement the agreement. When a commitment is cemented, it then offers no loopholes, no bail-out provisions but will instead offer incredible productivity and happiness.

And that's really what life is all about – personal commitments. Our jobs, hobbies, good works may be rewarding in themselves but unless we have someone to love, to whom we are committed, we run the possible risk of ending up insecure, lonely people. This applies not only to married people but also to all aspects of community living.

And when we do have a good commitment going, how can we make it even better? How can we keep that special relationship from getting shipwrecked on the rocky roads of mediocrity or hardship? Symbols of commitment, even if they are only little things, play an important part in our relationships. Symbols are concrete, visible signs of the inner reality of a commitment. They are the soil in which the seed of love grows.

Jesus gave us the Eucharist as a symbol of His everlasting love and commitment to us. Whenever we neglect this symbol, the commitment can become less meaningful and begin to dry up. As Jesus told us – “I want you to remember Me – and my love”.

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