



Take to Heart These Words

"Hear, O Israel!" (Deuteronomy 6:3) are the first words of the most important declaration of faith for Jewish people, a declaration that is the centerpiece of the morning and evening Jewish prayer services. It is a kind of "pledge of allegiance" that observant Jews say even today, reminding themselves of the uniqueness of their God and the covenantal relationship they have with this God. In it they confess that the Lord is their God, their only God. Out of reverence, they do not pronounce God's personal name. In its place they substitute the word *Lord*. Behind this act of faith is the covenantal promise of God: "I will be your God and you shall be my people" (Jeremiah 7:23).

This covenant carries mutual responsibilities. God will be their God and will be faithful to all that this blessing entails. As God's people, they will live according to the standards set by God, witnessing to the world the holiness in life lived for and with God. They are to love God with all their heart, soul, and strength.

Jesus did not change this declaration in any way. It is at the heart of the Christian way of life as well. What he did was throw light on the meaning of living for and with God, of loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength. He insists that to love God is to love others, and to love them as we love ourselves. "Hear, O Israel!" "Take to heart these words" (Deuteronomy 6:6).

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

FOR *Reflection*

- * How in your family or workplace might you show love by being kinder, more patient, and willing to forgive slights?
- * How open are you to changing your understanding when a new point of view is offered to you?

