

In his reply, Jesus points to the very central faith of Israel: '*Listen, Israel: the Lord our God is one and Him you shall love with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.*' (Deuteronomy 6: 5) This reminds me very much of the prayer, the minister prays before he proclaims the Gospel on Sunday: '*Lord be in my mind*' (that I reflect & think of you) '*On my lips*' (that I may continually praise & tell of you) '*In my heart*' (that my I may love you). In other words, the love of God mustn't remain, simply words written down, but it should be active, at the very centre of our lives motivating our every thought, word & action.

But then comes the punch, the ending which gives the whole story its message '*You must love your neighbour as your self.*' St John tells us: 'A person who does not love his neighbour that he can see cannot love God, whom he has never seen (1 John 4:20) Jesus teaches us today, that true religion isn't the observance of rules and regulations, attending church and saying prayers etc. True religion is sharing in God's love. We do not begin to love God, until we begin to love our neighbour.

Prayer over the Offerings

Look, we pray, O Lord, on the offerings we make to your majesty, that whatever is done by us in your service may be directed above all to your glory.

Prayer after Communion

May your Sacraments, O Lord, we pray, perfect in us what lies within them, that what we now celebrate in signs we may one day possess in truth.

“Love cannot remain by itself – it has no meaning. Love has to be put into action, and that action is service.”

Mother Teresa

This Sunday's Readings: *Thirtieth Sunday Yr A* **25th October 2020**

The Two Inseparable Commandments



Today, the Gospel continues to proclaim serious lessons, that Jesus taught in the framework of harsh confrontations with the scribes and Pharisees and in so doing, Jesus reveals the Father's Kingdom and how we are to live our lives if we wish to enter into it. In today's passage an 'expert in the Law' questions Jesus, concerning the 'greatest commandment.'

The Ten Commandments, given to Moses on Mount Sinai, (Exodus 20) reveal God. They are a light in our darkness; a pathway leading to life. Notice, however, how the scribes and Pharisees use the Law – it is no longer life-giving, on the contrary, they use it to trap Jesus, to ensnare him. In his reply to their question, Jesus challenges them, and us, to get back to the heart of the matter – to love God, to love our neighbour.

Opening Prayer

Almighty ever-living God, increase our faith, hope and charity, and make us love what you command, so that we may merit what you promise.

Exodus 22: 20-26

The Lord said to Moses, “Tell the sons of Israel this, 'Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt. Do not take advantage of the widow or the fatherless. If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. My anger will be aroused, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives will become widows and your children fatherless. If you lend money to one of my people among you who is needy, do not treat it like a business deal; charge no interest. If you take your neighbour's cloak as a pledge, return it by sunset. It is all the covering he has; it is the cloak he wraps his body in; what else would he sleep in? If he cries to me, I will listen, for I am full of pity.'”

The Book of Exodus tells about the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery, the covenant of Sinai and the wandering in the wilderness, therefore the material is very old, between 1446 – 1406 BC. Today's passage comes just after God has revealed himself to Moses on Mount Sinai and given Israel the Ten Commandments. What follows is a series of laws and prescriptions elaborating, filling out God's Law. These are definitely not 'add ons', thought up after the event, but they are the fruit of reflection and the experience of living as God's children. So, we should welcome the stranger, care for the widow, the orphan, the poor in need – because that is how God treats us! We are called to reflect God's love in our lives.

Psalm 17

*I love you, Lord, my strength, my rock, my fortress, my saviour. My God is the rock where I take refuge; my shield, my mighty help, my stronghold.
The Lord is worthy of all praise: when I call I am saved from my foes.
Long life to the Lord, my rock! Praised be the God who saves me. He has given great victories to his king and shown his love for his anointed.*

1 Thessalonians 1: 5-10

The gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians is one of the earliest letters he wrote (50 AD) just 20 years after the life and ministry of Jesus. It is not a careful theological treatise, but an urgent and hurried response to the problems of a developing community. Before he corrects his listeners, he begins by thanking & encouraging them – a fine lesson for us all. In accepting the Gospel, the Thessalonians have become an example to all.

Alleluia, Alleluia!

Open our heart, O Lord, to accept the words of your Son.

Alleluia!

Matthew 22: 34-40

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

