

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time – October 25, 2020 – Good Shepherd Parish

Scripture Reading: Exodus 22:20-26

Thus says the LORD: "You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt. You shall not wrong any widow or orphan. If ever you wrong them and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry. My wrath will flare up, and I will kill you with the sword; then your own wives will be widows, and your children orphans.

"If you lend money to one of your poor neighbors among my people, you shall not act like an extortioner toward him by demanding interest from him. If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, you shall return it to him before sunset; for this cloak of his is the only covering he has for his body. What else has he to sleep in? If he cries out to me, I will hear him; for I am compassionate."

Psalm: Ps 18:2-3, 3-4, 47, 51

R. (2) I love you, Lord, my strength.

I love you, O LORD, my strength,
O LORD, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer.

R. I love you, Lord, my strength.

My God, my rock of refuge,
my shield, the horn of my salvation, my stronghold!

Praised be the LORD, I exclaim,
and I am safe from my enemies.

R. I love you, Lord, my strength.

The LORD lives and blessed be my rock!
Extolled be God my savior.

You who gave great victories to your king
and showed kindness to your anointed.

R. I love you, Lord, my strength.

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10

Brothers and sisters: You know what sort of people we were among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, receiving the word in great affliction, with joy from the Holy Spirit, so that you became a model for all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth not only in Macedonia and in Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. For they themselves openly declare about us what sort of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to await his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the coming wrath.

Gospel: Matthew 22:34-40

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a scholar of the law tested him by asking, "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."

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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

Kids go through grade school and high school with important questions to face. Am I “in” with the crowd? Could I hold my own against the bullies, can I get along with girls/boys, did I wear the right clothes, am I cool enough? And so on. These questions are obviously more important and crucial than anything else in life. Who “thinks” when they are in high school? I did not think much about the place of “love” in the overall scheme of any life. Then as a college freshman I took Fr. Robert Boyle, S J, for English literature. He was a great teacher, without question. One proof of his greatness lay in a statement he often made: “If you want to know what is happening in a work of literature, look what love is doing.” *Look at what love is doing.* “What?” my barely 18 year old self gasped. “I never heard that love was such a big deal. I thought it was something parents naturally have for you and tell you about over and over and over. Could it really be the key to plays, poems, novels, short stories and literature? Could it be the opening to humanity’s meaning? Ulp. I had better pay attention.”

We went through Shakespeare, Hopkins, Joyce, Keats, Milton, and I can’t remember how many more. The clouds began to part, and I began to see that Boyle was right: the lives of characters centered around this something we call “love.” Try it out when you read your next serious novel or short story. Which character acts out of real regard for the other(s) and which does not? What happens as a result? And: what about love in your own life? Again, ulp. Have you discovered that love is quite a bit more than pretense, more than an ideal, more than just a thing we crave from others, and certainly more than just pleasure? Have you seen that learning to love is the very air inhaled by such everyday importances as work, relaxation, attractions, happiness? Without love’s living atmosphere none of these could breathe, and neither could we. In Sunday’s Gospel, Jesus says the same in no uncertain terms. You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments. “What?” we might exclaim (as I did in college). I thought that law consisted of commands forced upon me from the outside, rules whose violation would bring punishment. What is this about law depending on love? Take a look. God does not fail at love. God waits. God says, “how wonderful that you are learning!” God says, “I love every person on earth. And you—you are my beloved. I am at your side as you learn to open to me and to others.” Do you and I succeed in this? Well, we need laws to help us. But the root of law and of life is fair care of others. It is loving concern under God for human persons. Ultimately this is an replication of God’s love for us. “Look what love is doing.”

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. God’s love brought the Israelites out of Egypt where they had been aliens. According to this reading, how were they to repay God’s love? How do you repay God’s love for you? How does this First Reading relate to the Gospel reading?
2. Every place the Thessalonians went, the “word of the Lord sounded forth.” How can you yourself “sound forth” (without preaching)? Do you know anyone in the world who does that today? in your parish? in your workplace? Can you “sound forth” with actions instead of words?
3. You were made in God’s image and likeness, and every good thing you have comes from God. What does God ask in return? Whatever your answer, is it always easy? Discuss whether “love your neighbor” includes your arrogant neighbor or just your kind neighbor.

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

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. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unit of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

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Prayer to St. Michael

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen