

### **30<sup>th</sup> Sunday (A) October 29, 2023**

Mother Teresa once said of herself, “By blood and origin, I am all Albanian. My citizenship is Indian. I am a Catholic nun. As to my calling, I belong to the whole world. As to my heart, I belong entirely to the heart of Jesus.” It is this relationship of belonging and the loving service which grows out of that belonging which the scriptural authors called covenant. In this we say Mother Teresa was called by God to love the Lord and to do the service for the humanity.

In the first reading Moses speaks on social ethic but not on justice, but on compassion of God. The Law of Moses civilized the Jews, instilling in them the idea that it was wrong to oppress an alien or take advantage of the poor. These were things they themselves had suffered, because their God cared for widows and orphans and wanted them to do the same. The result was that the ancient Jews began to build an excellent, humane society rooted in the basic religious concept that loving God necessarily involves loving one’s neighbor.

One of the scholars wanted to test Jesus. He asked Jesus which is the greatest command in the law. Jesus gave a straightforward answer, quoting directly from the Law itself and startling his listeners with his profound simplicity and mastery of the law of God and its purpose.

He cited the first sentence of the Jewish *Shema* prayer: ... “*Therefore, you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength*” (Deuteronomy 6:5). Then He added its complementary law: “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*” (Leviticus 19:18). Finally, He declared that the “whole law and the prophets” depended on the commands to love God “with all your heart, with all your soul and all your mind” and “your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus actually combined the originally separate commandments and presented them as the essence of true religion.

The uniqueness of Jesus’ response consisted in the fact that he understood the two laws as having equal value or importance. We are to love our neighbor and our self as a way to love God: God gives us our neighbors to love so that we may learn to love Him.

Thus, Jesus proclaims that true religion loves God both directly and as living in our neighbor. We are to love God and express it by loving our neighbor because God lives in all human beings.

Love of God means putting him first, respecting his name, and keeping his day. It also means a dedication of the entire person to His will, placing Him first in the mind and the heart, speaking respectfully about Him, and keeping His day as one of prayer and true recreation, a day to keep His Law. The love of God transforms lives every waking moment of the day.

Love of neighbor means respect for others, their relationships, their reputations, and their property. This love begins at home with one's parents. It then extends to others. Love of neighbor extends beyond our family and friends to strangers, especially to the poor, the sick, and the sinner. Love of neighbor knows no national borders or class distinctions or barriers of any kind, because God knows no such impediments.

Paul congratulated his audience on the positive effects of their example of loving one another as Jesus had commanded them to do. They had received the gospel with ready faith, and withstood persecution with joy.

Let us ask God to give us the ability to love God with all our heart, mind and soul and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. God's will is that we should love everyone, seeing Him in our neighbor. This means we have to help, support, encourage, forgive, and pray for everyone without discrimination based on color, race, gender, age, wealth or social status. May god bless us with all his graces.