

The Living Word

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

31 October 2021

First Reading Dt 6:2-6

Hear Israel, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.

Moses said to the people: 'If you fear the Lord your God all the days of your life and if you keep all his laws and commandments which I lay on you, you will have a long life, you and your son and your grandson. Listen then, Israel, keep and observe what will make you prosper and give you great increase, as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you, giving you a land where milk and honey flow.

'Listen, Israel: The Lord our God is the one Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength. Let these words I urge on you today be written on your heart.'

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 17:2-4. 47. 51. R.v.2

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

1. 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.
(R)
2. Long life to the Lord, my rock!
Praised be to the God that saves me.
He has given great victories to his king
and shown love for his anointed. (R)

Second Reading Heb 7:23-28

This one, because he remains for ever, has an eternal priesthood.

There used to be a great number of priests under the former covenant, because death put an end to each one of them; but this one, Christ, because he remains for ever, can never lose his priesthood. It follows, then, that his power to save is utterly certain, since he is living for ever to intercede for all who come to God through him.

To suit us, the ideal high priest would have to be holy, innocent and uncontaminated, beyond the influence of sinners, and raised up above the heavens; one who would not need to offer sacrifices every day, as the

other high priests do for their own sins and then for those of the people, because he has done this once and for all by offering himself. The Law appoints high priests who are men subject to weakness; but the promise on oath, which came after the Law, appointed the Son who is made perfect for ever.

Gospel Acclamation Jn 14:23

Alleluia, alleluia!

**All who love me will keep my words,
and my Father will love them and we will
come to them.**

Alleluia!

Gospel Mk 12:28-34

This is the first commandment, and the second is similar to it.

One of the scribes came up to Jesus and put a question to him, 'Which is the first of all the commandments?' Jesus replied, 'This is the first: Listen, Israel, the Lord our God is the one Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: You must love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.' The scribe said to him, 'Well spoken, Master; what you have said is true: that he is one and there is no other. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself, this is far more important than any holocaust or sacrifice.' Jesus, seeing how wisely he had spoken, said, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' And after that no one dared to question him any more.



Reflection by Fr Michael Tate

Jesus does not command us to love 'God' in the abstract. Teaching Jew to Jew he says: 'You shall love the Lord your God' – the Lord who had rescued the Jewish people from slavery. So, commanding a love which responds to an initiative of Divine Love.

Why wouldn't one respond 'heart, mind, strength, soul' in gratitude for the gift of life itself, for some particular person or incident, for the beauty and grandeur of nature, for rescue from some situation which seemed to engulf us? And if the Lord God loved you in such a way, why wouldn't you love yourself?

Then you can properly 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. There is nothing sentimental in his teaching from Leviticus 19:18 and the preceding verses. Jesus was pointing to the system of social justice which looked after the poor and which did not exploit workers. It is up to us as global citizens of the 21st century to recognise as 'neighbours' those beyond our borders and to love them in the practical 'Levitical' way.

Fulfilling the Dual Command, we guard against the extremes of religious piety or social activism and become Christian humanists loving God and neighbour.

We might pause a moment to pray in responsive gratitude to the Lord God, and to commit ourselves to loving our neighbour, hoping to hear the words of Jesus Christ: 'You are not far from the Kingdom of God.'

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