

Thirtieth Sunday Year A. 29th October. Love of God and Neighbor are the Great Commandments.

Today's liturgy is a strong call for a rethink. Our existence is a privilege; just as we are loved by God, we are expected to love all irrespective of our status. In our First reading God reminded the Israelites the need to accommodate everyone, not to show any form of discrimination against foreigners, they were once aliens somewhere else. Possible there was this attitude of oppressing the orphans and widows and strangers by the leaders of Israel. God has warned them to treat them with love. In our second reading, Paul praised the Thessalonians because they imitated the Lord and became models to other believers. We should not take any opportunity of our meeting with others for granted, we may be impactful to them either positively or negatively. We may be the source of their repentance or leading them to damnation. It depends on the kind of attitude we present. Like the Thessalonians, let us work on our attitude to be models to others here in the church the way we reverence God through the church's sacraments, and in our home: how we welcome people, and in our place of work: how we treat fellow workers.

The gospel presented us with another event where the Pharisees tested Jesus when they heard that he silenced the Sadducees. One of them a scholar asked Jesus which is the great commandments, they were coming from the background of Jewish laws which amounted to 613 Jesus answered them right. The great commandment is "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. This is Bible, catechism and Vatican II documents made easy. The summary of the Christian faith. Jesus was not preaching a new thing, in Deuteronomy 6:5 (love of God) and Leviticus 19:18 (Love of neighbor). He only merged the two in one statement. The moment we keep to one and neglect the other, we are going to miss all. We have the duty to love God above all and to love people he made in his image. This brought us to the two-dimensional relationship. Vertical and Horizontal.

The relationship with God is vertical, while our relationship with our neighbor is horizontal. Who is that God we are relating to him? He is our heavenly Father who gave us the sacrament as a point of contact with Him, and that God can be found in our neighbors too. **Who is our neighbor?** Is that stranger in need of our love. Is that homeless in need of shelter. Is that poor in need of our help. Is that hopeless in need of hope. Is that sick person in need of healing. Is that lonely person in need of friendship. Is that street child in need of foster parents. Is that graduate in need of employment. Let us love the Lord our God who is our strength, like the psalmist, the heart that seek the Lord rejoice always. May God grant us His love and peace of mind so that we may love him by loving our neighbors. Amen.

Peace,

Fr JINGBE Simon