

## 30<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

[Reading I: Exodus 22:20-26](#)

[Responsorial Psalm: 18:2-3, 3-4, 47, 51](#)

[Reading II: 1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 22:34-40](#)

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/102923.cfm>



The selection from the book of Exodus is part of the covenant code. It describes the social norms that God expects of those who are in a relationship with him. There is a crucial link between loving God and loving one's neighbor. This passage highlights one of the dimensions of our call to follow the way God acts. God has concern and compassion for the powerless. In ancient Israel, men possessed everything, including wives and children. If a man died, and the woman did not have a male relative, she had no standing in society. The same with children. They were at the bottom of society.

God cares for them and hears their cry because they have no power of their own and must rely upon God. Israel was powerless when they were in slavery in Egypt. God heard their cry and came to their aid. If we are to be in a relationship (covenant relationship) with God, we are called to live and act like God does. If we abuse or mistreat the powerless, then God will be their defender and we will be powerless against God.

The gospel passage continues the conflicts between Jesus and the leaders of the Jewish community. The conflict with the Sadducees that is referenced in the opening line is presented between the reading from last week about paying the Roman tax and the conflict that is presented today. The Pharisees return and try to embarrass Jesus again. They were legalists. Keeping the law was the greatest priority for them and how they would achieve salvation. They recognized 613 laws in the books of Moses. Which of these was the most important was debated amongst them. Jesus is asked to take a stand. He replies by quoting two passages, one from Deuteronomy and the other from Leviticus.

Jesus presents the standard of faith through which salvation comes to a person. No one earns salvation. It is a gift from God. It is through a loving relationship with God that one enters into the life of God. Faith though is not simply an intellectual activity. A life of faith manifests itself through one's words and deeds. It is in the daily choices that one expresses one's faith. Hence the two commandments.

This combination was not original with Jesus. It is found in earlier Jewish writings. What is unique is that Jesus says the second is like the first. It is co-equal. One cannot simply claim that by being religious and focused on God one is following God. The love of neighbor is like the love of God. Both flow from what it means to love.

In the first letter of John, it declares that God is love. (1 Jn 4: 16) If we are to be truly loving people, then that love knows no bounds, just as God's love knows no bounds. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus calls us to love our enemies and to pray for our persecutors. God loves them and if we truly love God, we will love them as well.

In the same way, one cannot simply love others and do good things for them. This is just humanism. The two aspects, love of God and neighbor are connected. They must both be done to be authentic.

In the second reading, Paul is affirming the church at Thessaloniki, for responding to the Gospel message. It contains hints of Paul's core message to them: 1) there is one God, 2) Jesus is the savior, and 3) Jesus will come again. In their response to Paul's message, they have become a witness to others in Asia Minor. The description of how they accepted the Gospel and are living it out has spread throughout the area and it is making a difference in the lives of others. Chiefly, their renunciation of the pagan idols stands out and speaks to others.

**Themes:**

Love of God and Neighbor

One True God

Preferential Option for the Poor

Saints who gave their lives to those in need

**Reflection Questions:**

What are some of the ways that you express your love for God by loving your neighbor?

What is wrong with trying to earn God's love or the gift of salvation?

Are there any ways in which you find yourself being a legalist in your relationship with God?

How do you learn about and share in the suffering of others?

Are there any idols in your life that take priority over drawing closer to God?

**Prayer Suggestions:**

For the Church: that we may manifest our love of God and neighbor in words that express our commitment and in deeds of compassionate service

For a spirit of compassion: that our hearts may feel the pain of others and reach out to all who are suffering or in need

For the gift of single-heartedness: that we may be guided by love in every area of our lives and never be satisfied with just loving God or just doing good deeds for others

For an evangelizing spirit: that our faith may shine forth and be an invitation to others to come to know the God who made them and loves them

For new priorities in our communities: that guided by a preferential option for the poor, our plans and activities ensure that everyone is included in our community life