

October 29, 2017 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Love your neighbor!

Exodus 22:20-26 Psalm 18 1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10 Matthew 22:24-30

In the first reading the Israelites are taught not to oppress aliens or to do wrong to widows and orphans and treat the poor with compassion and even lend them money interest free. Otherwise there will be a strong response from God who hears the cry of the poor and punishment will be swift.

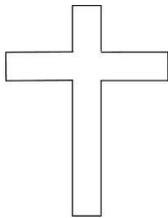
The psalmist declares the Lord is his strength, his shield, his rock. He praises the Lord for his kindness and realizes that he is safe because the Lord protects him from his enemies.

In the second reading Paul praises the Thessalonians for they have truly responded positively to the gospel. They became a model for other believers as they turned away from idols and put their faith in the true and living God. They received the word of the Lord in hardship but also with joy from the Holy Spirit.

"Teacher, which commandment is the greatest?" asked the Pharisees. Jesus' response was two-fold: "Love God with all you heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself." The whole law and prophets depend upon these two commandments.

The Father sends the Son for us to imitate,  
and reminds us that our neighbors are also temples of the Holy Spirit.

### Love God, Love Neighbor



The Great Commandment: Jesus' response to the Pharisees, "Loving God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and loving your neighbor as yourself," can be visualized as a vertical relationship between us and God, and a horizontal relationship between ourselves. These two directions, in turn, image the sign of the cross (+). We are used to thinking of the cross as entailing hardships but in this case Jesus is telling us that living the Great Commandment will bring continual blessings upon us. When you bless yourself let it be a reminder to live the Great Commandment.

These two commandments bring to light the critical three way love relationship that brings us new life in the Spirit: love of God, love of neighbor, love of ourselves. The Great Commandment can certainly be most difficult to follow at times; however, the image of the cross in this instance is a symbol of great blessings for the person that lives it. If either of the directions is missing the blessing dissolves. *If anyone says, "I love God," but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. This is the commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.* (1John 4:20)



# The Great Commandment<sup>1</sup>



Our relationship with God is vertical,<sup>2</sup>  
With neighbor, horizontal.<sup>3</sup>  
The two combine in perfect unity.

The Spirit of the Whole cannot set one part  
In antagonism with the other,  
Both are duly proportioned.

Taken together they image the sign of a cross,  
More than an ornament from heaven  
It conveys wisdom from long ago.

The tension between the two directions  
Must be centered else it causes separation,  
One direction acting alone can be fatal.

Create God in our own image,  
According to our personal needs,  
And the vertical fades away.

Mix selfish interests  
Into our relationships with neighbor  
And the horizontal dissipates.

Harmony is lost when antagonism  
Conflicts the fundamental principle  
Of the two acting as one.

This principle is the basis for the Law and prophets  
And its fulfillment brings  
The greatest of blessings.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 12:18-24    Matt 22:34-40

<sup>2</sup> Dt 6:4

<sup>3</sup> Lev 19:18, Rom 13:9, Gal 5:14, James 2:8