

30th Sunday of the Year - A

Ex 22:20-26; I Thes 1:5c-10; Mt 22:34-40

In the Gospel today, Jesus combines the commandment to love God with the commandment to love one's neighbor and as one Commandment of supreme importance in Christian life. Jesus underlines the principle that we are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves because as God's children both of us bear God's image, and to honor God's image is to honor Him. Love for our neighbor is a matter, not of feelings.

We need to love God: Loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, means that we should place God's will ahead of ours, seek the Lord's will in all things we do and make it paramount in our lives. There are several ways by which we can express our love for God and our gratitude to Him for His blessings, acknowledging our total dependence on Him. We must keep God's Commandments, and offer daily prayers of thanksgiving, praise and petition. We also need to read and meditate on His word in the Bible, and accept His invitation to join Him in the Mass and other liturgical functions when we can.

We need to love our neighbor: God's will is that we should love everyone, seeing Him in our neighbor. Since every human being is the child of God and the dwelling place of the Spirit of God, we are actually giving expression to our love of God by loving our neighbor as Jesus loves him or her. This means we need to help, support, encourage, forgive, and pray for everyone without discrimination based on color, race, religion, gender, age wealth or social status. Forgiveness, too, is vital. We love others by refusing to hold a grudge for a wrong done to us. Even a rebuke can be an act of love, if it is done with the right heart. We also express love through encouragement and by helping others to grow. We express *agápe* love in meeting the needs of others by using the talents and blessings that God has given us, by comforting each other, by teaching each other and by sharing the Gospel, in deeds and in words.

Love them anyway: There is a children's home in India, founded by Mother Teresa. The home continues to be operated by the Missionaries of Charity. On the wall of the home hangs a sign which reads:

People are unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered. LOVE THEM ANYWAY

If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish motives, DO GOOD ANYWAY

If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies, SUCCEED ANYWAY

The good you do will be forgotten tomorrow, DO GOOD ANYWAY

Honesty and frankness make you defenseless, BE HONEST AND FRANK ANYWAY

What you spent years building may be destroyed overnight, BUILD ANYWAY

People really need help but may attack you if you help them, HELP PEOPLE ANYWAY

Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth, GIVE THE WORLD
THE BEST YOU'VE GOT ANYWAY

Love of God means placing Him first, respecting His Name, and keeping His Day [Sunday] holy. To love God means a dedication of the entire person to His will, placing Him first in one's 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. Love of God transforms lives every waking moment of every day.

Love of neighbor means respect for others, their relationships, their reputations, and their property. Deu: 6:5 and Levi: 19:18 indicate love in action. Loving our neighbor as ourselves means looking at and treating others with the respect God gives them. 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 borders or barriers of any kind, because God knows no such impediments. So we got to love God and express it by loving our neighbor because God lives in everyone.