

Commentary on the Readings for Today, October 29, 2017

The 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

(As we have done in the past, we will start with commenting on the Gospel first in order to better understand the message of all the Readings for this Sunday. The reason for this is that the Gospel sums up the essence of the entire Bible including God's purpose for all of creation. Now, you might say, "Wow! That covers a lot of territory" and you would be right. Let's look into this deep subject further to find out what it is.)

The **Gospel Reading** is from *Matthew (22:34-40)*. Shortly after Jesus outsmarts the Sadducees (last Sunday's reading about the "coin of tribute") a Pharisee comes to Jesus with another question to trip Him up. Jesus answers by summarizing all of the commandments into two, "**Love of God and love of neighbor.**" **Now**, it might be natural to say, or think, "Ah ha, He out-smarted them again" and then forget about the next sentence: "**The whole law and the prophet's [teachings] depend on these two commandments.**" Jesus is not interested in playing games with the Pharisees or Sadducees, or us. He is giving them, and us, His "new" insight into the commandments, which, if kept in sincerity and honesty, will gain us eternal life. So, with so much to gain, why is it that many people don't follow Him, or just ignore His instructions? Here He has taken the full Ten Commandments and all the Jewish laws and condensed them to two. So, what's so difficult to understand?

The **First Reading** is from the *Book of Exodus (22:20- 26)*. In this passage, we have a more detailed version of some of the commandments involving "Love of neighbor." "**Love**" in this usage is meant to include all the components of that word: Respect, Helpfulness, Forgiveness, etc. "**Neighbor**" is anyone with whom we come in contact. Without much effort, one can see that these commandments do cover a lot of territory and they were given to all mankind fifteen hundred years before Jesus Christ. Jesus didn't change them; He just simplified them to include anyone and everyone.

The **Responsorial Psalm (18:2- 4, 47, 51)** is a prayer of praise in response to those commandments pertaining to love of God. In its longer version, this psalm is a great prayer of thanksgiving to God in recognition of His divine authority and benevolence. You are encouraged to read it all and include it in your daily prayer.

The **Second Reading** is from *St. Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians (1:5- 10)*. In this passage, we hear how the Thessalonians responded to Paul's teachings earlier and now they have become model examples in loving God and neighbor. At the end, Paul gives us his own version of the idiom: "Actions speak louder than words."

If you were to go back and read the Gospel passage again, you would see how trivial the Pharisees are in testing Jesus. These commandments, indeed all the commandments, should be in the minds and hearts of all mankind from a very early age and we should live by them. St. Paul tells us: "Love never wrongs the neighbor; love is the fulfillment of the law." (Romans **13:10**) Something to think about during your Prayer time this week!

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