

Alleluia, alleluia! / All who love me will keep my words, / and my Father will love them and we will come to them. / Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mt 22:34-40

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

You shall love the Lord your God and your neighbour as yourself.

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees they got together and, to disconcert him, one of them put a question, 'Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?' Jesus said, 'You must 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 resembles it: you must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets also.'

■ The Gospel of the Lord.



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Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / A

29 OCTOBER 2023

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

Communities, like the individuals that make them up, cannot exist or grow without reflecting on their stories. In remembering our past, we are reminded of lessons learnt, values shared, and obstacles overcome.

While the setting for the first reading is that of the time of the Exodus it clearly reflects the problems the Israelites faced when they had settled in the land. In order to resolve these problems, they are called to remember that they are a people where every member should be valued, especially those who cannot defend themselves. The other person is precious to God and has a dignity that is to be respected and preserved. They are reminded of their past so as to build a present that is just and equitable.

Jesus in his turn was asked what the most important commandment of the law was. The law of Moses was that formative and guiding tradition that shaped the Jewish people's self-understanding. In a sense, by asking what is the greatest commandment the Pharisees were asking, who are we? Jesus' reply is that we can only be truly ourselves when we can balance a wholehearted love of God with care for our brothers and sisters.

As Paul reflects on the history of the Thessalonian community, he praises God for the way they have overcome numerous obstacles. In the midst of opposition, they remained faithful to each other and to the Lord, so much so that they became a base for Paul's further missionary endeavour in the rest of Greece.

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

Ex 22:20-26

A reading from the book of Exodus

If you are harsh with the widow or the orphan, my anger will rage against you.

The Lord said to Moses, 'Tell the sons of Israel this, "You must not molest the stranger or oppress him, for you lived as strangers in the land of Egypt. You must not be harsh with the widow, or with the orphan; if you are harsh with them, they will surely cry out to me, and be sure I shall hear their cry; my anger will flare and I shall kill you with the sword, your own wives will be widows, your own children orphans."

"If you lend money to any of my people, to any poor man among you, you must not play the usurer with him: you must not demand interest from him.

"If you take another's cloak as a pledge, you must give it back to him before sunset. It is all the covering he has; it is the cloak he wraps his body in; what else would he sleep in? If he cries to me, I will listen, for I am full of pity."

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Ps 17:2-4, 47, 51. R. v. 2

R. I love you, Lord, my strength.

1. I love you, Lord, my strength, / my rock, my fortress, my saviour. / My God is the rock where I take refuge; / my shield, my mighty help, my stronghold. / The Lord is worthy of all praise: / when I call I am saved from my foes. **R.**

2. Long life to the Lord, my rock! / Praised be the God who saves me. / He has given great victories to his king / and shown his love for his anointed. **R.**



SECOND READING

1 Thess 1:5-10

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians

You turned away from idols to serve God and await his Son.

You observed the sort of life we lived when we were with you, which was for your instruction, and you were led to become imitators of us, and of the Lord; and it was with the joy of the Holy Spirit that you took to the gospel, in spite of the great opposition all round you. This has made you the great example to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia since it was from you that the word of the Lord started to spread – and not only throughout Macedonia and Achaia, for the news of your faith in God has spread everywhere. We do not need to tell other people about it: other people tell us how we started the work among you, how you broke with idolatry when you were converted to God and became servants of the real, living God; and how you are now waiting for Jesus, his Son, whom he raised from the dead, to come from heaven to save us from the retribution which is coming.

■ The word of the Lord.