

Homily for the 30th Sunday of Ordinary Time, A, Oct. 25, 2020

In our Gospel reading today we are once again with Jesus in Jerusalem in the area just outside the Temple. This was a spot where people liked to debate the questions of the day.

So, in our reading Pharisees dare to challenge Jesus by sending not only some of their fellow Pharisees to trick Jesus up but also some Herodians. They ask Jesus: *“Which command in the law is the greatest?”* Remember at that time there were not only the Ten Commandments but also 613 other commandments. Jesus moves wisely beyond a debate of the 600 plus laws by answering the Herodians with one simple law: *“Love God and love neighbor.”* In fact, there are two parts of this one commandment. It is similar to our act of breathing which include inhaling and exhaling. The love of God we breath in always turns us out into the world around us. Our love of God turns us towards people who are hurting, wounded, sorrowing, hungry and who need to see the love of God through our love for them. One of my favorite scripture quotes is taken from 1John: *“Those who say they love God and hate their brothers and sisters are liars!”* The **love of God** cannot just be a warm feeling. This love of God in the New Testament actually has a name **“agape”** which means doing kind things for others. When Jesus commands us to love one another he gives us an example. Remember at the Last Supper on the night before he was to die he washed the feet of the disciples. Was that not an act of love? On the Cross Jesus dies for us. St. John’s Gospel tells us: *“No greater love a person can have for his friends is to die for them.”*

What are some of the things we as Christians should do to show our love for God? We collect food and stock food pantries when the world says there is *“no such thing as a free lunch!”* We shop and wrap gifts at Christmas time not to give to each other but to

give to those who would have no gift if we didn't give them one. Yet the world says: "*you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours.*"

Again, love of God and love of neighbor is not an option for us. Remember one of the greatest stories Jesus told us was the Good Samaritan. The Good Samaritan helped the man who was wounded by robbers without any hope of a return for his efforts. He saw someone in trouble and did what he did because it was a fellow human being.

Yes, in the eyes of the world we may seem odd but more importantly in the eyes of God this is love in action. When you think of it on the command to love, hang all the laws of God. St. Augustine put it this way: "*Love and do what you like.*" Today's Gospel lesson touches on the very heart of the Christian message and indeed of all human living.

Finally, we need to say that this love is not necessarily an emotional and romantic love. It is a love that our first reading indicates which involves treating every single person with deep respect, with justice, with compassion.