

October 25, 2020
30th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Ex 22:20-26
1 Thes 1:5-10
Mt 22:34-40

DO IT FOR LOVE OF HIM!

Last Sunday's gospel, Jesus said: **"Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God."** These words are not at all the biblical basis for the separation of Church and State. Rather, these words of Jesus are meant to remind us that we belong to God. His image and likeness is in our soul. We are his. Therefore, we have to make sure that our words and works are reflective of his image and likeness in us.

How can we give God what belongs to him? In what ways we can make our lives pleasing to him? What concrete actions can we do to repay his goodness to us?

Our gospel proclaimed today gives us the answer. We, who belong to God, can repay him by loving him and our neighbor. Jesus clearly reiterates to us that these commandments of loving God and loving one's neighbor are very important. They should not be detached from each other. They must go hand in hand. They are the two pillars of an authentic faith. To choose one and disregard the other is damaging, a disservice to the faith.

The answer of Jesus to the scholar of the law tells us that these two commandments have the same or equal value/importance. It is actually the true essence of what it means to follow and worship God. Our love for God must be expressed in our relationship with our 'neighbors.' On the same note, our love for our 'neighbors' must be our expression of our true love for God.

Our 1st reading conveys to us concrete ways to love God as expressed in loving others. Let me give you the context of this reading. The context was that God liberated his people from Egypt. He manifested his love by protecting them. He loved them so much that he wanted to enter into covenant with them. He gave them the terms of the covenant. The people agreed. Part of the covenant was the social conduct laws that we have heard. These laws were not so much based on justice but on compassion. They were to show God's compassion and mercy to their 'neighbors.' Thus, we have heard words like: **"You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt."** **"If you lend money to one of your poor neighbors among my people, you shall not act like an extortioner toward him by demanding interest from him."** **"If he cries out to me, I will hear him; for I am compassionate."** This reading clearly tells us that if we truly love God it must be demonstrated in our compassionate and merciful treatment of others.

Once a British journalist visited Calcutta, India to see the works of the **Sisters of the Missionaries of Charity**, founded by Mother Teresa. He went to their old-age house at Kali-ghat Temple and watched an attractive young nun dressing the wounds on a man with gangrene in his leg. The journalist was appalled by the very sight of the wound, but at the same time he was full of admiration for the young nun who seemed to show no disgust as she was cleaning

the suppurating wound. **"I wouldn't do that for \$2,000,"** said the journalist. **"Neither would I,"** said the nun, **"I do it for love of God."**

We are here today because we love God, **right?** Like the story of the nun, may all the works we are going to do and the words we are going to utter will all be for the love of God and nothing else.

Allow me to suggest the following as our way of loving God and loving our neighbor.

- Let us demonstrate our love for God by being hospitable, welcoming host, especially to the strangers in our midst. Since we cannot shake hands or hug them because of this pandemic, greet and smile at them.
- Let us demonstrate our love for God by regularly communicating to him in loving prayer – not only on Sundays or when we need something from him – but every day, rain or shine, in sadness and in joy.
- Let us demonstrate our love for God by knowing him through reading the bible, in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, and in our daily meditation. Let these processes form and transform us into becoming like him every day.
- Let us demonstrate our love for God by humbly serving others. May the service we are going to render magnify the Lord and not ourselves. When we find that our service is about 'I, Me, and Myself' and not really about love for God, better stop it.
- Let us demonstrate our love for God by making sure that we use wisely his gift of time.
- Let us demonstrate our love for God by joyfully imparting the gift of talent he gave us for the good of the Christian community and for the glory of his Name.
- Let us demonstrate our love for God by generously sharing the gift of treasure given to us in building up his kingdom here on earth.
- Let us demonstrate our love for God by choosing leaders, who carry and live God's values, regardless of political party affiliation.
- Let us demonstrate our love for God by taking the time to teach our Catholic faith to our children.
- Let us demonstrate our love for God by proclaiming about him, without fear, even in public.
- Let us demonstrate our love for God by embracing seriously the mission entrusted to us when we were baptized.
- Let us demonstrate our love for God by reaching out, more than ever, to those in need during this time of pandemic.

These are just some of so many ways we can love God and love others. The challenge is – **are we willing to do it?**

As we continue our celebration, we ask the Lord Jesus to give us the grace to always recognize the importance of both commandments: **loving God** and **loving others** as we respond to the call of stewardship as a way of life.