The 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year A – 10/25/26 – Msgr. Peter Quang Nguyen

First Reading – **Exodus 22:20-26:** Do not oppress aliens, widows, or orphans; I will hear their cries. Don't charge interest to your poor neighbors, and return pledged cloaks before sunset. I am compassionate.

Responsorial Psalm – **Psalm 18:** I love you, Lord, for you are my strength, rock, and deliverer. Praised be the Lord; I am safe from enemies and blessed. You give victories and show kindness.

Second Reading – **1 Thessalonians 1:5C-10:** You followed our example and the Lord's, receiving the word even in hardship. Your faith has become a model for believers far and wide, and you've turned from idols to serve God.

Gospel – **Matthew 22:34-40:** A scholar tests Jesus on the greatest commandment. Jesus says it's to love God fully and the second is like it, love your neighbor as yourself. These sum up all law and prophets.

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

There is a reality: many people have separated the two commandments—loving God and loving one's neighbor—treating them as if they were unrelated. Some place great emphasis on religious observances within the church while showing little concern for their fellow human beings; conversely, others advocate for a "faith of the heart" while neglecting their duties toward God.

In today's Gospel, Jesus reaffirms the two most important commandments—loving God and loving one's neighbor—which are inseparable and rooted in the Ten Commandments. Indeed, the Ten Commandments, given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai, can be summarized by these two precepts: **the first three** focus on loving God above all else, while **the remaining seven** address the duty to love one's neighbor as oneself.

1. To love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

With all your heart: This means with your entire being—your whole heart, your will, and your freedom.

With all your soul: This means a soul constantly directed toward God through prayer, intimate conversation with Him, participation in the Holy Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours, and the fulfillment of one's religious obligations.

With all your mind: This means engaging your intellect and consciousness in everything you do, as an expression of your love for God.

In short, love for God must be the primary priority in the life of faith, held with the disposition of a child of God.

Yet, as the Apostle John says: "If anyone says, 'I love God,' but hates his brother, he is a liar." For whoever does not love their brother whom they can see, cannot love God whom they cannot see. And this is the commandment we have received from Him: whoever loves God must also love their brother." (1 Jn 4:20-21). Therefore, whoever loves God above all things also knows how to love their neighbor as themselves.

2. Love your neighbor as yourself.

What does it mean to love others as oneself? In the Old Testament, the Book of Tobit touches upon this, though in a negative (prohibitive) sense: "Do not do to anyone what you yourself would dislike" (Tob 4:14). In the New Testament, however, Jesus teaches from a positive perspective: "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you" (Mt 7:12 // Lk 6:31).

While loving one's neighbor as oneself—and successfully putting this into practice—fulfills the Law, it is even better to dare to love one's neighbor "more" than oneself. This is what it truly means to resemble Jesus, who dared to lay down His life out of love, and who endured hunger and thirst so that we might be enriched. The martyrs, too, dared to sacrifice their lives so that we might possess faith in God. This represents the highest level of love—*"agape"*—which transcends all calculation and self-interest, distinct from *"eros"* (possessive love) or *"philia"* (reciprocal love), as categorized by the Greeks.

Love is not merely a sentiment held in the heart or empty words spoken with the lips; it must be expressed sincerely through concrete actions (cf. 1 Jn 3:18). How can we ever lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters if we do not first practice through small things—such as desiring for others to be happy, joyful, and to *"have life, and have it more abundantly"*? It means rejoicing with those who rejoice and sorrowing with those who sorrow—sharing every morsel of food, every... ...offering a garment, a word of encouragement or comfort, or refraining from speaking ill of others—by doing such small things, we love others sincerely; and, should the need arise, we might even lay down our lives for them (cf. 1 John 3:17).

Saint Bernard once said, *"The measure of love is to love without measure,"* and Saint Augustine taught, *"Love, and then do what you will."* This means that our mercy, love, and charity should have no limits; we ought to do whatever we can. Yet, any good deed performed without love is ultimately in vain.

We are neighbors to all, regardless of their circumstances in life—but have we ever ignored the plight of those in deep suffering, all in the name of reasons "deemed holy or lawful"...?

Lord Jesus, the journey toward glory—which we follow You upon—is not merely a vertical relationship with You; it is also inextricably linked to the horizontal beam of the Cross: our relationship with our neighbor. Grant us the awareness that we can only truly love You when we learn to love our neighbor. Amen.