

## The 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B – 11/2/2014 – Msgr. Peter Quang Nguyen

- **First Reading** – Deuteronomy 6:2-6: Moses instructed the people to fear and obey the LORD, promising growth, and prosperity. Love the LORD with all your heart, soul, and strength, and take these words to heart.
- **Responsorial Psalm** – Psalm 18: I love you, Lord. You are my strength, rock, and refuge. You save me and keep me safe. Blessed be my savior, who gives victories and shows kindness.
- **Second Reading** – Hebrews 7:23-28: Jesus is our eternal high priest who intercedes for us. He is holy and offered himself once for all. He is perfect forever.
- **Gospel** – Mark 12:28b-34: A scribe asked Jesus about the greatest commandment. Jesus answered, saying to love God completely and love your neighbor as yourself. The scribe agreed, and Jesus affirmed his understanding.

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Today's Gospel recounts the story of a Jewish Doctor of Law who came to ask Jesus about the most important commandment. Jesus did not directly answer about any of the Ten Commandments but gave two that summarize all the laws. They are to love God and to love people.

Many people have separated the two commandments of Love God and Love People into two and have no correlation with each other: Most people value keeping the church's religion but do not care about their fellow human beings, and conversely, many people advocate that religion is "in the heart" and forget about their duties to God.

Jesus reaffirmed the two most important and inseparable commandments of Love God – Love People mentioned in the Ten Commandments. Indeed, the Ten Commandments given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai are summarized in two things (the Ten Commandments are summarized in these two things, but not...): the first three focus on LOVE GOD ABOVE ALL THINGS and the last seven speak of the duty to LOVE OUR OWNERS AS OURSELVES.

### **1. Love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind.**

**With all your heart:** That is, with all your mind, with all your heart, that is, with all your will and freedom.

**With all your soul:** The soul is always directed toward God in prayer, confiding in God, attending Mass and the Hours, and performing religious duties.

**With all your mind:** With all your knowledge and awareness in everything you do to show your love for God.

In short, love for God is the top priority in living the faith, with the heart of a child of God. But as the Apostle John says: *"If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must love his brother also."* (1 John 4:20-21). Therefore, whoever loves God above all things also knows how to love his neighbor as himself.

### **2. Love others as yourself.**

What is loving as yourself? In the Old Testament, the book of Tobit mentioned it in a negative way: “*What you do not want others to do to you, DO NOT DO it to them*” (Tob. 4: 14), but in the New Testament, Jesus taught in a positive way: “*What you want others to do to you, do so to them*” (Mt. 7:12), (Lc. 6:31).

However, that is only loving others as ourselves, and if we can practice it, we have fulfilled the law. But it is even better when we dare to love others more than ourselves, to truly be like Jesus, who dared to give his life for love, who endured hunger and thirst so that we could be rich. The martyrs also dared to sacrifice their lives so that we could have faith in God. That is the highest level of love, agape - beyond all calculation, not like eros (possession) or philia (reciprocity) according to the Greek analysis.

Love is not just love in the heart or said on the tip of the tongue but must love sincerely and by action (1John 3:18). How can we give our lives for our brothers and sisters, if we do not practice from small things such as: wanting others to be happy, joyful, joyful, “*to live and live more abundantly*”. Rejoice with them, be sad with them. Share every bite of rice, every piece of clothing, every word of encouragement, comfort, as well as not gossiping or speaking ill of others, ... If we can do small things like that, then we have loved them sincerely, and when necessary, we can also give our lives for them (1John 3:17).

St. Bernard said: “*The measure of love is to love without measure*” and St. Augustine also taught: “*Just love and do what you can*”. That is, we do not set a limit for mercy, love, and charity, but do what we can, and no matter what good deeds we do, if there is no love in them, it is useless.

We are close to all lives in society, but have we ever ignored their tragic circumstances, for reasons “considered holy and legal”...?

The Psalm in the Office of Readings says:

*“O Lord, let my ears hear clearly,  
The voice of others’ prayers is so great,  
They suffer, they cry out,  
Do not let me turn a deaf ear.  
Bowling to You, please open my hand,  
Always hold tight to everything,  
At the door of the house there is a poor and hungry person,  
Please teach me to share with joy”.*

In short: Loving God and loving people are two relationships of a person, both religious and social. People live in a vertical relationship with God and a horizontal relationship with others. Christians live the mystery of charity, which includes these two inseparable dimensions: It is impossible to say that we love God without loving others, as Saint John the Apostle himself affirmed.

*Lord Jesus, please let me always see You present in everyone we meet, so that when we practice charity and love with our fellow human beings, we know that we are doing it for the love of You and have the power to save souls.*