

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year A

Exodus 22:20-26; 1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10; Matthew 22:34-40

Excerpts from World Mission Day 2026

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Brothers and sisters, a scholar of the law approaches Jesus in today's Gospel with a question that asks about the most important thing we must do in life. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" Well, we all know the answer. But was this a trap for Jesus, a question to test him, or was this truly very important to have the right answer? Yes, this wasn't an easy question, since there are 613 precepts in the Old Testament.

Jesus' answer, however, is clear: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." However, he adds two things. "And second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself." Now that is not an easy task. If it were so, we would not have disputes, and wars across the world. So, what is Jesus trying to say here? That "the whole law and the prophets," in other words all that God commands, "depend on these two commandments." Everything in Christian life flows from the love of God and love of neighbour. It is not as two separate realities, but as one interrelated movement.

Jesus doesn't tell us, "Love me, as I have loved you," but "love one another, as I have loved you." Our love for Jesus will be shown in our love for our neighbour, whom he calls us to love with all our mind, heart and soul without restriction.

The first reading from the Book of Exodus makes this very concrete. God speaks with urgency about the treatment of the vulnerable: the stranger, the widow, the orphan, and the poor. Our care for them reveals our love for God. It shows whether our relationship with God is real. Jesus would make this abundantly clear later when he would say that the way we treat the hungry, thirsty, naked, stranger, ill or imprisoned is the way we treat him (Mt 25:31-46).

If sharing God's love of our neighbour is so essential to the Christian life, why is it sometimes so difficult? The answer is found in the second reading, when Saint Paul reminds the Christians in Thessalonica how their faith began: not simply as a teaching they received, but as an encounter that changed them. "Our Gospel didn't come to you in word alone, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit," which helped them turn "from idols to serve the living and true God."

We cannot really love as Jesus commands unless we have first encountered his love for us. We're loved first, and from that love, we learn how to love. This is the foundation of the Church's missionary activity. In his message for World Mission Sunday 2026, Pope Leo XIV underlined that love is the "essence" of the Church's mission.

He said, “The mission of the disciples and the Church as a whole is to continue the mission of Christ in the Holy Spirit: a mission born of love, lived in love, and leading to love. ...

Impelled by the love of Christ, the Apostles then went out to evangelize for Christ (2 Cor 5:14). In the same way, throughout the centuries, multitudes of Christians — martyrs, confessors and missionaries — have given their lives to make this divine love known to the world. Therefore, guided by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love, the Church’s evangelizing mission will continue until the end of time.” He praised the love of God and the neighbour found in missionaries past and present, who sacrifice in order to share the love of God with people who once were strangers.

Like Saint Francis of Assisi, who once lamented, “Love isn’t loved,” he urged us, like Saint Therese of Lisieux, “to love Jesus and make him loved.”

Jesus in today’s Gospel makes it plain that loving God and neighbour — or, in Saint Therese’s words, loving him and making him loved — is the most important thing we need to do. Everything else the Church does hinges on this two-fold command, which flows from the experience of Jesus having loved us enough to give his life for us and then to become our very food in the Sacrament of Love — the efficacious sign of divine love — on the altar.

Through this Eucharist, let us receive that love anew, be transformed by it even more, and then let that love overflow for the evangelization and transformation of the world.