Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time A - "You Shall Love the Lord Your God with All Your Heart, And with All Your Soul, And with All Your Mind."
October 25, 2026

In today' Gospel (Matthew: 22: 34-40), the Pharisees and the Sadducees take turns to provoke a response from Jesus with the toughest "gotcha" question of all, which they have designated an attorney in their midst to ask about which commandment in the law is the greatest. Perhaps they expected Jesus to take a while, to ponder all of the 613 Jewish laws involving all the rites and rituals observed in their community. We can only imagine their surprise when Jesus immediately responded with this statement, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." as the greatest and first commandment. And the second is: 'you shall love your neighbour as yourself. 'On these two commandments hang all the laws and the prophets."

These two commandments offer as much a guiding light for contemporary Christian followers today as they did the moment Jesus uttered them to the Pharisees and Sadducees. When Jesus describes the most important commandment—loving God with all your heart, soul and mind—it seems straightforward. Jesus calls us to put God ahead of everything and everyone. But will there be challenges to living out the greatest commandment? Without a doubt! For instance, how do we follow and trust God when we are confronted with pain, suffering, and loss? How do we lean into God in those particular moments, believing that we serve a God who will provide the strength and comfort we need, even if we do not like the outcome?

In 1 Corinthians 13:13, St Paul writes, "And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love." Faith in God is like a flower that continues to open throughout life. There is no telling how wide the bud will open. However, we continue to trust that, with nourishment, that flower will grow. Hope is grounded in faith. While faith focuses on the truths of God, hope propels the will toward God's goodness and eternal promises. True hope does not disappoint because "God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:5). As for love, St. Paul says "Love is patient; love is kind…not envious or boastful…does not insist on its own way... not resentful…does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends" (1Cor 13: 4-8) Many wedding couples, including us, have chosen this as one of the readings for their wedding liturgy because it truly defines love in the most profound way.

But do we really know love, especially love for God and our neighbour? In the Old Testament, we've heard how much God loves us: 'I have loved you with an everlasting love' (Jeremiah 31:3); 'Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken, nor my covenant of peace be removed,' (Isaiah 54:10); 'Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!' (Isaiah 49:15) and the frequently quoted: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.' (John 3:16) This is the kind of agape love that Jesus is showing us that we should follow. Love is the driving force and guiding principle of the Christian life. Do we do that? Can we say we love God simply because we are not breaking the ten commandments, we are going to church every Sunday, we are praying the rosary all the time? Scripture keeps telling us that 'anyone who says he loves God and hates his brother is a liar' (1 Jn 4:20-21) We cannot call ourselves Christian and continue crucifying our neighbour. Loving our neighbour as ourselves is a necessary element in giving our hearts and minds to God and that is where the challenge lies, especially when the

people next door is bad-mouth and their children downright bad-mannered, not to mention our colleagues who are getting on our nerves. To show love in such circumstances is dreadfully difficult and demands great effort and yet, more often than not, we meet God in such an encounter. God cares about how we treat others because everyone is made in his image.

We all want love to be a thornless rose, but if we follow Christ, we will find that it involves sacrifice and the shadow of the cross. There can be no genuine religious or pastoral experience that remains deaf or indifferent to the cries, suffering, and needs of the world. Loving God requires seeing and serving Him in the neighbour. Love is, waiting upon the aged, nursing the sick, patching up quarrels and taking the time to listen to the broken-hearted. Very few expect to discover love in weakness, powerlessness and suffering and yet that is the heart of Christ's message to the world. Jesus' birth in the stable is as one who was homeless, dying on the cross as a common criminal identifies him with the spiritually, physically and materially poor of the world. His parables of the Good Samaritan, the prodigal son; his association with tax collectors, woman caught in adultery tell us his love for the downtrodden, the neglected, the despised in the world. The gospel message is not an ideal to be admired but a way of life to be lived if we are to walk humbly with our God. If we were to be charged as followers of Christ, is there enough evidence to convict us? In our daily living as Christians, do we have proof that we love our God, and in turn our neighbour, with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our mind? Even if we have, we can only say as the hymn goes: 'The love we have for you, O Lord, is only a shadow of your love for us; only a shadow of your love for us; your deep abiding love.' (Carey Landry)