

Rectoría San Juan de Dios  
XXX Sunday of Ordinary Time-Cycle A  
Ex 22, 20-26; Ps 18; 1 Thes 1, 5-10; Mt 22, 34-40  
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## Let Us Love Our Neighbor

In today's passage in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus synthesizes all the law and the prophets into the two great commandments; they have filled us with joy and hope. Especially today, when every day fewer people in the world are asking about the *Commandment of the law of God*; instead, large social groups separate themselves from their religion or from practicing it and drift into a lifestyle that simply no longer considers the divine will or command. Nor is this world growing in love toward its fellow man. Fewer and fewer people worry about those close to them, even if they are a couple, parents, or children. We can see clearly that the comment of the dark philosopher is true: "Man has become wolf to man."<sup>1</sup>

To make the need for the commandment of love more powerful, we can remember Cain after killing his brother. God asks him: *Cain, where is your brother?* Although it may seem overstated, that voice of God is still being heard today. Now, at the level of family and society, He asks us, the new Cains, "Where is your neighbor?"

The case of the Pharisees and Sadducees, in the voice of the doctor of the law who questioned Jesus, is extreme. In the conversation they had among themselves, they hoped that Jesus would specify *the observation of the Sabbath* as the most important commandment. But on the contrary,

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Thomas Hobbes, "De Cive" and others. Expression taken from Plautus (254-184 BC).

Jesus leads them to understand that religion does not depend on observing empty rituals, but on the attitude of the believer, specifically the love of God through love of neighbor. We see that for Jesus it was simple to turn them back to the origin of the law by reminding them of what they already knew: the *Shemâ*, the prayer and song that all pious Jews prayed three times a day: “...*you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and with all your strength...*” (Deuteronomy 6, 5) and “...*you shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” (Leviticus 19, 18)—the two inseparable commandments. But the leaders of the people had carried the Law of Moses to the extreme, laying down 613 precepts and prohibitions.

Jesus, on the contrary, synthesizes *the law and the prophets* in the two commandments of love. If *we love God with all our heart, all our soul, and with all our mind*, we understand that God is not only the object of love, commitment, will, and feeling, but also of the intellect and the mind. Thus, the progress of the physical/spiritual life of the believer is: I love God because He is the origin of my being, and I love what God Himself gives me; thus I love my neighbor so that he receives from me what God has for him; and in the same sense, I receive from my neighbor the confirmation that God loves me.

Loving our neighbor can seem difficult and upon occasion impossible; nevertheless, it is the way that Jesus sets before us so that we live our religion authentically and truly love God.

To fulfill the commandments of God, let us try these three attitudes:

### 1-Let us think about our neighbor.

It is probable that my spouse, my parents or children, that is, those closest to me, cry out to God just as we heard in the book of Exodus, because we have not given back their cloak. What things do your dear ones cry out to God for that they have not told you about because of fear or shame? What have you cried out to God for that your dear ones don't know about? What are the necessities that you have and that your neighbor lacks?

If we think about this carefully, we will find that although it seems that we love God with all our heart by loving our neighbors, we often fall short. Or not?

### 2-Let us be a model.

So many of our closest neighbors as well as those who form part of our work, social, or community environment, need us to be a model for them in a way similar to the example of the first communities evangelized by St Paul. Especially now, when many who have not come to maturity in their faith or love are lost. It is similar to when we hold on to the paternal or maternal image, in order to resolve any eventuality: we ask ourselves, what would my mother or my father do in a situation like this? Our new neighbors and the neighbors of the world need us to provide a model to sustain them in their love and their religion. We also think about the new generations who need a path to follow.

Who has been a model for you so that you would not be lost? For whom are you a model at this time of your life?

### 3-Let us make love of our neighbor foundational.

We love not only with our own love, but with the love of God. This is foundational love, an immovable love

that builds relationship and certainty of the future and love. It generates joy, creativity, and desires for transcendence. Foundational love guarantees us that someone has a commitment with us, for always, for everything, in every circumstance of our lives.

What do you say: Do you dare to live the religion of Jesus, synthesized in the two commandments of love? Do you dare to love your neighbor as yourself?