

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON** (or a hymn) Let the hearts that seek the Lord rejoice; turn to the Lord and his strength; constantly seek his face.

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM** (Ps 17)

**ANTIPHON:** I love you, Lord, my strength.

**RESPONSE:** I love you, Lord, my strength.

**LECTOR:** I love you, Lord, my strength, my rock, my fortress, my saviour. My God is the rock where I take refuge; my shield, my mighty help, my stronghold. The Lord is worthy of all praise: when I call I am saved from my foes. **R.**

**LECTOR:** Long life to the Lord, my rock! Praised be the God who saves me. He has given great victories to his king and shown his love for his anointed. **R.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** Alleluia, alleluia! All who love me will keep my words, and my Father will love them and we will come to them. Alleluia.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON** (or a hymn) We will ring out our joy at your saving help and exult in the name of our God.

**(Or)**

Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, as a fragrant offering to God.

**TODAY'S READINGS** Exodus 22:20-26; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10; Matthew 22:34-40

**NEXT WEEK** (31st Sunday, Year A) Malachi; 1:14-2:2. 8-10; Ps 130; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-9. 13; Mt 23:1-12

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*Love your  
neighbour*



October 29 2023 30th Sunday Year A

The rabbis in Jesus' time identified 613 commands (248 positive [you shall] and 365 negative [you shall not]) that were prescribed in the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament. Given the impossible burden this posed, this prompted much argument as to which were the most important.

When, in the gospel today, the Pharisees, through a lawyer, ask Jesus which is the greatest commandment, they do it to trick him, knowing that he is unschooled in the intricacies of Jewish Law.

Jesus' reply is disarmingly simple and straightforward. Jesus is in no doubt about the first and greatest commandment. It is to love God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. But Jesus immediately goes on to state that the second commandment is to love your neighbour. Notice that he distinguishes these two commands, but he does not separate them.

Indeed, he indicates that, in a sense, they constitute a single command. His point is very clear: love of God and love of neighbour go hand in hand and, together, encapsulate what God requires of us.

But Jesus then adds a punch line that is a real challenge to his interlocutors: "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." In other words, these two commandments are not simply the greatest or the most important. But all other laws (those 613 or any others that might be

promulgated) fall under these two. Those two commandments are the core. They are like the pillars from which all else hangs and to which all others must adhere.

Here then we come to the very heart of Jesus' teaching about how we are to live our lives and express our discipleship. It is love that is commanded of us as his followers. This love is to be expressed in mercy, compassion and forgiveness, in generosity of heart and magnanimity of spirit, in our individual lives and in our life together as a community.

Today's reading from the Book of Exodus puts before us some very concrete demands of love of neighbour: we are not to wrong or oppress a resident alien. This surely prompts us to reflect in particular on our response, individually and collectively, to refugees and asylum seekers.

We are also urged not to abuse any widow or orphan, nor the defenceless or the vulnerable, the poor or oppressed. To meet these very practical and concrete demands of love of neighbour is an essential aspect of our Christian lives.

Jesus' teaching is so very simple and yet so profoundly challenging. Just as he challenged his listeners then, he challenges us today to reflect on our behavior in terms of our love of neighbour, and how we might do better, and on our love of God and how we might grow in loving God with all our heart, soul and mind.

**Anne Hunt**

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