

Readings for November 4, 2018 -- 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time

With All Your Heart

Jesus fulfills the commandments given to the people of Israel, and challenges us to greater love. Love of God means also loving your neighbor. "There is no other commandment greater than these."

Opening prayer: (See back pages)

Reading 1 DT 6:2-6

Moses spoke to the people, saying:

"Fear the LORD, your God, and keep, throughout the days of your lives,
all his statutes and commandments which I enjoin on you, and thus have long life.

Hear then, Israel, and be careful to observe them,

that you may grow and prosper the more,

in keeping with the promise of the LORD, the God of your fathers,

to give you a land flowing with milk and honey.

"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone!

Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God,

with all your heart,

and with all your soul,

and with all your strength.

Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you today."

Responsorial Psalm PS 18:2-3, 3-4, 47, 51

R. (2) **I love you, Lord, my strength.**

I love you, O LORD, my strength,

O LORD, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer.

R. **I love you, Lord, my strength.**

My God, my rock of refuge,

my shield, the horn of my salvation, my stronghold!

Praised be the LORD, I exclaim,

and I am safe from my enemies.

R. **I love you, Lord, my strength.**

The LORD lives! And blessed be my rock!

Extolled be God my savior.

You who gave great victories to your king
and showed kindness to your anointed.

R. **I love you, Lord, my strength.**

Reading 2 HEB 7:23-28

Brothers and sisters: The levitical priests were many
because they were prevented by death from remaining in office,
but Jesus, because he remains forever, has a priesthood that does not pass away.
Therefore, he is always able to save those who approach God through him,
since he lives forever to make intercession for them.

It was fitting that we should have such a high priest:
holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners,
higher than the heavens.

He has no need, as did the high priests, to offer sacrifice day after day,
first for his own sins and then for those of the people;
he did that once for all when he offered himself.

For the law appoints men subject to weakness to be high priests,
but the word of the oath, which was taken after the law,
appoints a son, who has been made perfect forever.

Gospel MK 12:28B-34

One of the scribes came to Jesus and asked him,
"Which is the first of all the commandments?"

Jesus replied, "The first is this: *Hear, O Israel!*
The Lord our God is Lord alone!

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul,
with all your mind,
and with all your strength.

The second is this: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*

There is no other commandment greater than these."

The scribe said to him, "Well said, teacher.

You are right in saying, 'He is One and there is no other than he.'

And 'to love him with all your heart,
with all your understanding, with all your strength,
and to love your neighbor as yourself'

is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

And when Jesus saw that he answered with understanding,
he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

And no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Related Reflections:

This gospel reading is an important reminder of what we are called to as Christians. I ask myself, how can I love the Lord with ALL my heart, soul, mind, and strength? How would God ask me to love him? Secondly, how do I love my neighbors as myself?

God is our constant companion, always beside us walking along the way. One of the greatest gifts is just to be and be present. Just by opening our eyes and ears to see God and hear God, we are invited into a loving relationship with him. Time and presence are the greatest gifts. They also allow us to hear his will for us. God desires our happiness and freedom. By listening and understanding, we can enter into God's love more fully and take on his will.

Our personal relationship with God is something so important and sacred, but through its nurturing we discover God calls us to bigger and greater love that cannot possibly end in ourselves. God is not only our constant companion, God is open, present, and real in everyone we meet. Do we dare take the time to hear God's voice in one another? In a way, by loving one another, we love God even more. We are called to accompany one another along the way, just as God is with us.

I ask myself these questions: Are my prayer practices allowing me to find God in myself and others? How can I better love the God within myself and others with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength?

Adapted From: Lent at SLU (Daily blog posts from Saint Louis University)

Go Beyond the Mind You Have:

In his inaugural speech, as reported in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus announced the arrival of the Kingdom of God and thereupon he immediately called people to change: "Repent and believe in the gospel." (MK 1:15)

The word that we typically render as "repent" is *metanoiete*, a term based on the two Greek words meaning *beyond* and *mind*. With the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God, we must change our attitude, our way of thinking, our perspective on things, the manner in which we see... Once we envision our own existence -- and indeed the being of the entire universe -- as the gift of a gracious God, we gladly resolve to give our lives away as a gift in love... Once we see that God *is* love, we are no longer afraid to risk the path of love.

(Bishop Robert Barron, Catholicism, Word on Fire, 2011)

Additional thoughts:

*"The Kingdom of God is Jesus himself. He is the Kingdom in person."
(Bishop Robert Barron)*

*"I really only love God as much as the person I love least."
(Dorothy Day)*

Meditation: Take a few minutes to think about these words. Then, share if you are willing.

Where Are You?

People often ask, "Where is God in my life?" The best response I can give is to ask, "where are you? -- That's where God is." In this way, prayer can be something really practical, and steeped in where we really live. In brief, we recognize the divine within ourselves, rather than trying to engage a God out there somewhere.

J.J. O'Leary, S.J. (reprinted in An Ignatian Book of Days by Jim Manney, Loyola Press, 2014)

God is here, in the world that I know, in my everyday experience. How wonderful!

Jim Manney, An Ignatian Book of Days, Loyola Press

Think of Jesus' words in the Gospel, "You are not far from the Kingdom." Where do you feel the presence of God most strongly in your life right now?

Additional Discussion Questions:

You and I are not far from the Kingdom. That's because Jesus is right here with us, in our midst. The Kingdom has come, is coming, and will come. How can I help to build up God's Kingdom here on earth?

How does it make you feel to know that we are close to the Kingdom? Does it change the way you see God's presence in your life?

For the week ahead:

Psalm 18 (from this Sunday's readings) offers a wealth of drama and promises fulfilled. Start at the beginning. Read and reflect on a few of the verses each day. At the end of the week, reread and reflect on the portion that meant the most to you. Why did those words stand out for you?

Closing Prayer: (or see back pages)

Lord Jesus, what you ask is often beyond my power.
Loving those who hate me,
Showing mercy and compassion to those who may not even realize my sacrifice;
that's a new way of living for me.
Stir your Holy Spirit within me;
Let me see as you see, and love as you love,
Without counting the cost. *Amen*

Allan F. Wright, From 25 Life-Changing Questions from the Gospels, Ave Maria Press, 2016

Suggested music:

One Thing (Housefires)