

Read

Exodus 22:20-26

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

1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10

Matthew 22:34-40

LIVING THE WORD

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 25, 2020



REFLECTION

In the Old Testament, we hear of many laws and commandments that the people of Israel followed. These came from their sacred texts and the words of the prophets of God. However, in today's Gospel passage, Jesus summarizes all of God's teaching into just two commandments! This might sound like we are getting a break, but these two commandments should be at the heart of all our choices. The first is to love God. The second is to love your neighbor. They are simply stated, but they can be challenging to follow. It is easy for us to fall into the bad habit of judging others and showing care and concern for only a small part of the population or only if people meet a certain requirement (like that they are similar to us or believe the same things we believe). By putting the commandment to love God first, Jesus reminds us that when we love our neighbor, we ought to do so as God loves them and as God loves us.



ACTION

How can you show love to your neighbor? First, we must consider who our neighbor is. In your journal, make three lists: "Love God," "Who is my neighbor," and "Love Neighbor." As you fill in these lists, look through the Gospel to see how Jesus answers these questions. Consider your actions in light of his. In the first column, write down the ways you show your love to God. In the second column, write down specific people and/or general groups who you would call your neighbor. Try to think outside of your comfort zone. In the final column, write down ways you can show those neighbors love, loving them as you love yourself.



Find out what the Church is doing to serve the neighbors in your community through Catholic Charities:

<https://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/find-help/>

? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Who considers you to be a neighbor? Do you consider those people as neighbors as well?
- ❖ What does compassion look like to you?



October 25, 2020

THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #148A

Exodus 22:20-26

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1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10

Matthew 22:34-40

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

The religious leaders of Jesus' day continue to test him in today's Gospel reading. They ask him to choose the greatest commandment. Of course, they know the Ten Commandments very well and were testing Jesus. They wanted to see if his answer would give them an opportunity to show he is a fraud. Jesus responds by saying that the greatest commandment is loving God with your entire being. He then takes the answer to another level by also emphasizes the second most important commandment, loving one's neighbor as oneself. When we look at all of the Church's teachings, we can see that they are rooted in these two principles.

Q FOCUS: *The two greatest commandments: loving God and loving our neighbor.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

St. Simon and St. Jude share a feast day on October 28. Both Simon and Jude were Apostles. There is not much known about these two Apostles. Still, the Church honors them as two of the men that Jesus specifically called to be part of the Twelve Apostles and to share in the mission of spreading the Good News. Although they came from different backgrounds (Jude was most likely a fisherman and Simon was possibly a Zealot, part of an extreme Jewish sect), both trusted Jesus completely and went where they were sent. Tradition holds that both men were missionaries in Persia, among other places.

Church Teaching Connection

"Love of God and love of neighbor are thus inseparable, they form a single commandment. But both live from the love of God who has loved us first: No longer is it a question, then, of a 'commandment' imposed from without and calling for the impossible, but rather of a freely-bestowed experience of love from within, a love which by its very nature must then be shared with others. Love grows through love" (*Deus caritas est*, 18).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 22:34-40

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a scholar of the law, tested him by asking, "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

This Gospel passage is one of the most integral passages that define what we believe as Catholics. Jesus came to do many things, but they all come together to show us the way to the Father. All that he taught and did throughout his life is the model for how we are supposed to live our lives as his followers. Before Jesus' time, the Ten Commandments and the Law were of utmost importance. These were based on the teachings of God that had come to the Jewish people through their sacred texts and the prophets.

► **How do we come to know the teachings of the Catholic Church? What are they based on?**

All of God's teachings came to be (and still are today) fulfilled in the person of Jesus. As such, he helped people to understand how these teachings were to be lived out. Jesus taught that the way we act and the way that we treat others is most important. They are a clear indication that we are followers of Christ. As we can see in today's Gospel passage, many people were caught up with doing the right thing and following the law strictly that they lost sight of what was crucial. Sometimes, we are so intent on following the rules and doing our best that we push others out of our way or neglect our duties to our families and friends. Jesus was responding to this kind of behavior among the people.

► **Can you describe a time when following the rules was most important to you? Have you ever mistreated others because you were set on following the rules?**

Once again, the Pharisees are trying to trap Jesus by making him choose one thing over another. Jesus responds by going beyond the parameters of their question—he gives two answers instead of one. The two most important commandments are loving God and loving one's neighbor. He goes even further by then saying that all the commandments, the laws, and the teaching of the prophets are based on these two integral commandments. If we orient ourselves toward God first, then love of neighbor easily flows from that love of God. One way you can remember these two greatest commandments is by thinking of the cross; the vertical bar points us toward God and the horizontal bar points our attention outward to others.

► **How do you live these two commandments in your own life? In what ways do you show your love of God and your love of neighbor?**

Multiple Scripture passages teach that we are to love God above all else, which can be difficult when we have parents, siblings, friends, and others whom we love as well. But orienting our hearts, minds and souls toward loving God is what inspires us to love others, even those people it is difficult to love sometimes. Celebrating the sacraments, incorporating prayer and reflection into one's life, and participating in the liturgy—these are all ways that we show our love for God. These experiences strengthen and nourish us to be able to go out and love one another.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 50.

The two most important commandments are to love of God and to love one's neighbor.

All of God's teaching flow from these commandments.

When we love God, the love of our neighbor flows directly from that first love.

Act on the Word

Love of God and Love of Neighbor

You will need copies of the Ten Commandments for each person, as well as scissors, tape, several blank sheets of paper, and pens.

Distribute the copies of the Ten Commandments, along with scissors. Write the two great commandments on the board or on an oversized pad of paper: "Love of God" and "Love of Neighbor." Instruct the teens to cut each of the Ten Commandments out in strips and then tape them under the commandment to which they refer. (Answer: The first three refer to loving God, the last seven refer to the love of neighbor.)

As you review each commandment that was placed in each category, discuss with the teens what these commandments mean for their daily life. For

example, it might be difficult for young people to understand the notion of "coveting your neighbor's wife or possessions," but they can understand the feelings of jealousy and greed. The Ten Commandments still apply today, but sometimes students need to think about them through a more modern lens.

If time permits, have the teens form small groups and write down other Church teachings. Then have them place them under one of the two greatest commandments. As you did with the Ten Commandments, discuss how each teaching relates to the everyday lives of young people and why it falls under that particular category.

Closing Prayer

*O Lord,
at the evening of this life,
we will be judged on love.
Make us loving people,
reaching out to others with the same love
with which you have loved us.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.