

OCTOBER 29, 2017



THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME



EXODUS 22:28-26

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

1 THESSALONIANS 1:5C-10

MATTHEW 22:34-40

REFLECTION

When my son Stephen was four years old, we had a bedtime ritual. After he was tucked into bed, I asked him, "Who do you love?" He would say, "I love Mommy." I would then ask him, "Who else do you love?" He would say, "I love my little sister Elizabeth." I would ask, "Who else do you love?" and he would list his grandma, his aunt Margaret, and even his neighbor friend. My son Stephen loved to tease me by not mentioning that he loved me, his father. So I would ask him, "Is there anyone else on this bed who you love?" Typically, he then would say that he loved me, his daddy. But one night he had a different response. He pondered who was on the bed with him that he loved and said with a twinkle in his eye, "I love myself." I asked him, "You love yourself?" He looked me in the eyes with an expression on his face that meant something like, Dad, how could you be so dumb? He said, "Daddy if you don't love yourself, you can never love anyone else." Amazed at the wisdom of my four-year-old son, I asked him, "Where did you learn this very important lesson?" He said, "Mr. Rogers told me." Why is it that a small child can comfortably say he loves himself, while it becomes so difficult to do this as we grow older? The Gospel reading for today provides some answers. Jesus states his most important teaching. He says that the greatest command is to love God with all your heart, all your mind, and all your soul. I often think about this command. Do I actually love God? This is a hard question. I certainly believe in God, but do I love God? I think the answer to how to better love ourselves and how to love our neighbor is found in first loving God. How does one love God? One begins by spending time talking and listening to God. This is how all love starts.

ACTION

The First Reading, from Exodus, is not so much about loving God or loving ourselves. It is about loving our neighbor. Perhaps this is also a key to learning how to love God and love ourselves. The Exodus reading focuses in on how we must especially love aliens (immigrants), widows, and orphans. We must love those on the margins. The challenge is to stand with and stand for the outcasts in our community. That takes courage. Where do you stand? What will you do this week to love God, love your neighbor, and love yourself?

JOURNALING QUESTIONS

● Do you love God with all you heart, all your mind, and all your soul? What actions can you take to foster your personal relationship with God? Where do you stand? Are you standing with those on the margins?