

30th Sunday of Ordinary Time Oct 29 2017 Year A Matt 22:34-40

Jesus tells us, that in His Father's house are many mansions. I think the readings Mother Church presents today echo from one, we might call the chamber of justice. Much of the book of Exodus concerns itself with organizing a godly society from out of the motely children of Israel. The instructions recognize a particular stage in that community's development and are offered, as a parent might instruct their child. A litany of "do and don'ts" and here's why." No doubt a people gradually coming back to life after generations of slavery would have keenly-developed insights around justice. The fledgling but law-abiding nation is instructed quite clearly through Moses, to not abuse their new freedom, as they themselves were mistreated by their oppressors. Imitate a new model where justice is of paramount importance. The stranger or refugee, the widow and orphan, the poor and all those of less means, are not to be neglected and uncared for, least they all suffer.

"Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor" to quote Pope Francis from his encyclical *Laudato Si* or *Praise Be*.

"The Church's love for the poor . . . is a part of her constant tradition." This love is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, of the poverty of Jesus, and of his concern for the poor. . . . "Those who are oppressed by poverty are to be the subject of a preferential love on the part of the Church which, since her origin and in spite of the failings of many of her members, has not ceased to work for their relief, defense, and liberation." (Catechism of the Catholic Church. Article numbers 2444, 2448) It all means that justice demands of the Christian follower that we attend to the needs of those marginalized. It is the measurement tool, we must employ to calibrate our love for God. It is also the means by which we participate in Triune love. Believers are invited to love our neighbour, just as God has loved, God's closest neighbour; namely us.

We don't need to look very far see the imbalanced way humankind generates wealth and poverty. But there are many types of poverty with plenty right here in our own families, parish and community. Reach out then to care for your neighbour.

If Christians fail to love our neighbour, we excuse ourselves from actively participating in Jesus' kingdom of justice. Allow the social decisions and actions we take to carry the hope of preferential love to all dismissed by their community's powerful?

Now, if there was one activity the religious technicians of Jesus' time, and maybe even our own enjoyed wrangling over, it was legal matters. But imagine someone today in Canada being hauled before the Supreme Court to have administered a Christian catechism test? What a wonderful opportunity? I might do OK on the theory part, but I know, I'm a miserable failure on the practicum. None-the-less a faithful and law-abiding Jew is Jesus, and when he is cross examined, is quite able to respond from right out of the textbook. And further, He's already passed the practical part of the exam and that's why he stands before this gang in the first place. You see, these folks were always sorting and ranking everything and everybody they could get their hands on, including God's law. They send in the professionals to interrogate Jesus, after the best of the Sadducees really have nothing.

Which of the laws are greatest? Can you hear the pride from where such a question originates? Jesus knows the law and so the debate gets a whole lot simpler. God never needs very much small talk. We have the multitude of laws and regulations governing all aspects of social life, boiled down to a two statement answer and ranking. Love God with everything you have and love your neighbour as you might love yourself. Nothing new here. You shall love your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might,” (Deuteronomy 6:5). And “Love your neighbor as yourself,” (Leviticus 19:18). Jesus doesn’t pull his response from thin air, but rather from Holy Scripture. What disturbs the authorities is how near to each other Jesus ranks these two commands. They are spliced, as if to say, they belong together in one sentence and breath. God, the answer informs, created humankind because love needs, only another to love. The Law and the words of the Prophets hang on these two commandments, just as the Pure Love hung upon a cross.

Well loving God is one thing but loving our neighbour is quite another. Our God is beautiful and my neighbour, well not so much. Our God is merciful and my neighbour, actually a little bit vengeful. Our God is all loving and my neighbour can be a little hateful at times. Or wait a minute! Maybe that what my neighbour says about me? Herein friends lies our Lord's challenge today. In loving God and neighbour, we might become channels of peace and justice. We redistribute the graces we receive by the power of the Holy Spirit and move our world a little nearer to God.

Amen