

MARCH 12, 2021
Friday of the 3rd Week of Lent
Mark 12: 28b-34

“UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.”

Our First Reading talks about the intention of Prophet Hosea for his people to come back to the Lord. During that time, the people had great anxiety, distressed, and lived in fear, and relied on their own power and allied to other nations than in God. Hosea said: “Take away all guilt; accept that which is good, and we will offer the fruit of our lips. For the ways of the Lord are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.”¹ Hosea is telling his people that only in God that they must rely on and only in and with God they will experience peace, harmony, and love. They just need to obey and follow and be loyal to the precepts of God. They must return to God and ask for pardon and healing. By following the will and the commands of God, they will be restored.

In our gospel, this is also the message and intention of Jesus : by following the precepts of God, we love God and our neighbors. There are 613 precepts and laws in the Jewish Old Testament Law which we called Torah or the Law of Moses. A devout Jews must memorize and follow it through the letter of the law. The Pharisees must be knowledgeable of these laws and the rites corresponding to these laws. They must practice it throughout their lives and must not fail to strictly follow it. This is the reason why they always question Jesus’ following, interpreting or fulfilling the Law of Moses, which most of the time they had conflict. In our gospel today, Jesus answered the question “Which commandment is the first of all?” with a simple, profound and mastery of the law and its purpose. He summarized all 613 laws into two essential laws: love of God and love of neighbor. He requires us to “love as He loves! God is love and everything He does flows from His love for us. God loved us first and our love for Him is a response

¹ Hosea 14: 2, 9 NRSV Catholic Bible Press USA

to His exceeding grace and kindness towards us. The love of God comes first, and the love of neighbor is firmly grounded in the love of God. The more we know of God's love and truth the more we love what He loves and reject what is hateful and contrary to His will.”² He always teaches us that if we love God, we need to love our neighbors. We can not say that I am always in the Church, receiving communion and other sacraments, praying, but not serving, loving others by being compassionate, merciful, patient and understanding. We need to practice what we received from our Lord, that is, His love and mercy.

So, my dear sisters and brothers, let us ask the Lord in this Eucharist to inspire us to live His laws by loving Him and serving our neighbors, that we may see God in others and may our brothers and sisters be the reflection of God to us. As God loves us unconditionally, we may also love others unconditionally, to all persons we come in contact with every day. This Lent, let us evaluate how we are doing in this regard: to love God and our brothers and sisters unconditionally.

² www.dailyscripture.net