

OCTOBER 31, 2021
Sunday of the 31st Week in Ordinary Time
Mark 12: 28-34

“LOVE MADE US LIVE AND KEEP US ALIVE.”

“Following a great victory, King Cyrus of Persia took as prisoners a noble prince, his wife, and their children. When they were brought into the leader’s tent to stand before him, Cyrus said to the prince, ‘What will you give me if I set you free?’ He replied, ‘I will give you half of all that I possess.’ ‘And what will you give me if I release your children?’ continued Cyrus. ‘Your majesty, I will give you all that I possess.’ The king questioned him further, ‘But what will you give me if I set your wife at liberty?’ Looking at the one he loved so dearly, the prince replied without hesitation, ‘If you will restore my wife to freedom, I will give you my life.’ Cyrus was so moved by his devotion that he released the entire family without asking recompense. That evening the prince said to his wife, ‘Did you not think Cyrus a very handsome man?’ ‘I did not notice him,’ she answered. ‘Why, my dear, where were your eyes?’ exclaimed her husband. She replied, ‘I had eyes only for the one who said he would lay down his life for me.’”¹

We heard a lot about love. We read a lot stories about love and giving one’s life for others, sacrificing their own for their loved ones, and ordinary stories with deepened love for others that touches hearts of many people. Christianity is base on love and Jesus showed that to us, He lived and practiced that love for us to imitate and share. The love that Jesus commanded us to do is to love without measures and no string attached.

In our first reading from the Book of Deteronomy, one of the books of the Jewish law, after Moses spoke to Yahweh and returned from Mount Sinai bringing the Ten Commandments, he explained to the people of Israel that reverence and obedience to the Law will bring them pride and dignity, purpose and reputation, distinction and a

¹ stories4homilies.blogspot.com

promise of temporal rewards. He said to the people: “Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, has promised you.”² Moses emphasized to prove their loyalty to the Lord, they must observe God’s commandments.

Our gospel story from St. Mark happened in Jerusalem when a scribe, an expert in interpreting the Law, approached Jesus. There were 613 laws Jews must memorized and practiced. “In the Judaism of Jesus’ day there was a double tendency: to expand the Mosaic Law into hundreds of rules and regulations and to condense the 613 precepts of the Torah into a single sentence. David condensed the Law into 11 statements (Ps 15), Isaiah reduced them to six (Is 33:15) and later to two (Is 56:1), Micah condensed them into three (Mi 6:8), and Habakkuk reduced them all to one: ‘the righteous shall live by his Faith’ (Hb 2:4).”³ The scribe asked the same question many people asked: which was the most essential, central, most basic among all laws? We can notice here that there is no hostility between Jesus and the scribe unlike in other occasions. The scribe just wanted to know what is the opinion of Jesus about the law as a rabbi and distinguished teacher. Jesus received and accepted the scribe positively, with love and took him as he is. We can learn from this: how do we stereotype people around us or our biases to people by class, race, language or color? Sometimes we uses labels to others that hinders us to fully grasp his/her self. We stereotype people we know before they opened their mouths based on on our prior experience with them. My brothers and sisters, Jesus is teaching us that we need to accept and respond to our brothers and sisters here and now as he/she is, without prejudices or biases. We need to follow the Lord in dealing with people.

² Deuteronomy 6: 3 Holy Bible NRSVCE Canadian Bible Society

³ frtonyshomilies.com

Jesus summed up all laws into two that are connected and can not be separated: Love of God and love of neighbor. “How do we love God? There are several means by which we can express our love for God and gratitude to Him for His blessings, acknowledging our total dependence on Him. We must keep God’s commandments, and offer daily prayers of thanksgiving, praise, contrition, and petition. We must also read and meditate on His word in the Bible and prayerfully attend Mass and other liturgical functions. If I am going to love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength, then I am going to have to place His will ahead of mine. This means that I will have to say no to some things that I might want to do. It also means that I will have to make seeking the Lord’s will, and then doing it, paramount in my life. Taken together, loving God means we open our hearts, give Him our will, develop our minds, direct our emotions, use our bodies and deploy our resources in ways that reveal our love for Him in active, loving service of Him in Himself and Him in everyone we encounter. How do I Love my neighbor? Since every human being is the child of God and the dwelling place of the Spirit of God, we are actually giving expression to our love of God by loving our neighbor as Jesus loves him and us. This means we have to help, support, encourage, forgive, and pray for everyone without discrimination based on color, race, gender, age wealth or social status. If I am going to love my neighbor as I love myself, it will cost me as well! I may have to seek forgiveness when I think I have done no wrong. I may have to sacrifice something I think I need to meet a brother’s or sister’s need. I may have to give up time to help someone. I may have to spend time in prayer for people, go to them, and reach out to them in the name of the Lord.”⁴

My brothers and sisters, Christian loving, as Jesus prescribed us involve sacrifices, pain and suffering, selfless giving, and even dying. He showed that to us on the cross, out of love for us. He embraced the cross to show and concretize His love for us. So, we ask

⁴ ibid

ourselves, is this the kind of love I have? Can I sacrifice and offer myself for others and for Christ? If not, you are invited to own it and if you are living and doing it, you are not far from the kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Love. Jesus is teaching and reminding us: love complete us, made us live, keep us alive and closer to God.

Let this be our prayer from the Prayer of St. Anselm (1033-1109), a Benedictine monk, Archbishop of Canterbury and theologian: "We love you, O our God; and we desire to love you more and more. Grant to us that we may love you as much as we desire, and as much as we ought. Give us love, sweetest of all gifts, which knows no enemy. Give us in our hearts pure love, born of your love to us, that we may love others as you love us. Amen."