

Thirty First Sunday in Ordinary Time

My beloved brothers and sisters, the fundamental teaching of the Gospel for today is that our measure for our love for God is directly proportional to the measure which we love our neighbor. Neither the love for God nor our love for our neighbor is measured by our affection for them; rather, it is measured by our care and concern for them. Jesus links forever, the commandment to love God to the love of one's neighbor. The word that is used for love in the Greek is *αγαπεσις*, it means: self-sacrificing love. What is truly amazing about this teaching of Jesus, is not its originality, because both of these commandments are found in Deuteronomy and in Leviticus. Rather, what is amazing is that the Son of God, Jesus, links these two commandments inseparably from each other!

What is amazing is that "neighbor", is not restricted just to your neighboring Jew in the same village; rather, it includes any human being who is in need! Therefore, if someone claims to love God, that love can be verified in the visible way they treat their neighbor. On the other hand, Jesus makes very clear the priority of love, which is to love God first above all things, and then to love my neighbor; for I will never love my neighbor as they deserve, unless God is first in my life; otherwise, I will always make myself first in my life!

Our post-modern world, our post-Christian world has mainly given up on the idea of God. Here is an amazing statistic: 52% of people who call themselves Catholic, no longer believe in God. There is a cynical indifference to God within our society. God has become, more and more, defined by how we feel about His Divine Law; rather than the self-revelation of God. Government and popular culture have put God into the closet. And the law of God is interpreted as what is politically correct, rather than what is revealed in nature and by the Word of God. Secular society has done the same with the concept of loving our neighbor- only if they fit into our politically correct schema.

My beloved brothers and sisters, I I don't love the God in whose image and likeness my neighbor has been created, I can never truly love my neighbor! There is an old philosophical dictum: **one cannot love what one does not**

know. Therefore, if I want to grow in the love of God, and grow in the love of my neighbor, I must grow in my knowledge of God and His Divine Law.

There are three things I must do if I am going to grow in the love of God and my neighbor: First, I must spend time every day in prayer, and especially in Biblical prayer. That is why the Rosary has led so many to a deep knowledge of God, it is essentially a meditation upon the mysteries of salvation. It is especially rich when I pray the Scriptural Rosary, which has a short verse from the Gospels or the Letters of the New Testament as a part of the meditation. Take prayerful walks and let God the Artist reveal His face to you in His creation.

Secondly, if I want to fall deeply in love with God, then I need to spend at least an hour of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, which is God present in Jesus in the gift, He Himself gave us in the Real Presence under the form of Bread and Wine, but are indeed His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. He wants to reveal Himself to you!

Thirdly, seek the face of God in your neighbor, ask God to reveal Himself to you in your neighbor, your children, wives, husbands parishioner, and especially those most in need, the poor, the outcast and the stranger. They are the Sacrament of God's Divine Presence: "What you do to the least of my brothers, you do to me!"