

**Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
(Matthew 22, 34-40)

The Jews were given hundreds of rules which they had to obey in faithfulness to the Law of Moses. It was therefore a very legitimate question to inquire which of these was the most important. One important point Jesus makes is that we may not separate love of God from love of neighbor. For Jesus, there is only one law, His commandment of love. All the rest are mere explanations. There is only one God who leads us to true love of neighbor. If we love our neighbors, there is no disrespecting, destroying of their good names, hurting their feelings or causing bodily harm. The first reading today (Exodus 22, 20-26) echoes the same sentiment. God demands that we show love to the poor, the alien, and the foreigner. We must not take advantage to the powerless and the ignorant.

Jesus lays down a rule we can all understand: love your neighbor as yourself. It makes us stand before our neighbor and tell him we are willing to do for him what we wish to be done to us: recognition of the good we did, respect for our person, personal attention, and patience.

The love for God and love for neighbor are not competing commandments. Love of God comes first. It is the foundation for the second. The second is the proof that we understand the first. Yet each demands a total commitment and is a touchstone of our sincerity in obeying the other. They are two legs of equal length which enable us to walk straight on the road of Jesus.

In the end, it is very important to remember that we can love God and neighbor because God loves us first. The initiative always comes from God. Our love is only a response!

Amen.

*Fr. Steve*