

Homily by Fr. Anthony Davis

What is the greatest rule of life?

October 25, 2020

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)

Exod.22:20-26; 1Thess.1:5-10; Matt. 22:34-40

Our 1st reading and gospel present us with a very challenging topic: "LOVE". When we hear that word, we automatically think of romance, joy, and warm feelings. Sometimes it is, but more often it is a matter of dedication, loyalty and commitment. Those who have matured in learning about love know that sometimes it's easy and sometimes it's hard work. But today Jesus teaches us that God's love rules everything.

Jesus summarized the whole of the law in two great commandments found in Deut. 6:5 - "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" - and Leviticus 19:18 - "You shall love your neighbor as yourself". By saying this Jesus means that, love of neighbor is an essential part of our obligations toward God. If we fail in this we fail in our love for God, for we refuse to carry out this sacred duty. So if we do not recognize our neighbor as our brother, we do not recognize God as our Father and we do not love him. "Anyone who says I love God, and hates his neighbor is a liar...Whoever loves God must also love his brother..." (1 Jn 4:20-21).

God's love directs all that he does - His love is holy, just, and pure because it seeks only what is good, beneficial, and life-giving - rather than what is destructive, evil, or deadly. That is why he commands us to love - to accept and to give only what is good, lovely, just, and pure and to reject whatever is contrary. God loves us wholly, completely, and perfectly for our sake - there is no limit, no holding back, no compromising on his part. His love is not subject to changing moods or circumstances.

When God gives, he gives generously, abundantly, freely, and without setting conditions to the gift of his love. That is why the Father sent his only begotten Son to redeem us from slavery to sin and its disordered cravings, desires, passions, and addictions. We do not earn God's love - it is freely given to those who open their heart to God and who freely accept the gift of the Holy Spirit. And it is by loving and helping our neighbor that we can earn our place in heaven, and also prove our love for God and our gratitude to him for all he has given, and promised to give to us.

What is the nature of love? Love is the gift of giving oneself for the good of others - it is wholly other oriented and directed to the welfare and benefit of others. Love which is rooted in

pleasing one's self is self-centered and possessive - it is a selfish love that takes from others rather than gives to others. It is a stunted and disordered love which leads to many hurtful and sinful desires - such as jealousy, greed, envy, and lust. The root of all sin is disordered love and pride which is fundamentally putting one's self above God and neighbor - it is loving and serving self rather than God and neighbor.

How seriously do we take this law of fraternal charity, and how faithfully do we carry it out? Indeed, not all of us may be able to give material help to a neighbor in need, but the poorest of us can spare a kindly and encouraging word, for a neighbor weighed down with cares and troubles. All of us can pray for a neighbor who needs spiritual and temporal help. Most of us can deny ourselves unnecessary luxuries in order to give a needed loaf of bread to a hungry fellowman, while those who have been blessed by God with abundance don't need to look to find the opportunity to practice Christian charity.

Remember that whatever spiritual or material help is given out of true charity to neighbor in need, is given to God, and whatever is given to God is soundly invested in heaven, and heaven pays handsome dividends. Refer to 1Cor 13:1-13.

"...There are in the end three things that last: Faith, Hope, and Love, and the greatest of these is Love".