

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

- I remember my aunt...
 - asking me about this this specific passage in our Gospel...
 - shortly after I converted.
 - She said:
 - “*You guys don’t still believe that do you?*”
 - She was referring to us Catholics.
 - And I didn't have much of an answer at the time.
- What Jesus said...about loving our parents...
 - it was simply too much for her...
 - and it was equally shocking...
 - for those who heard it...in Jesus’ time.
 - Because honoring your father and mother...
 - was more important than all the other Commandments...
 - except the first 3...and those of course...are about God Himself.
 - And the actual language that is used in that Commandment...
 - the word that we translate as ‘*honor*’...
 - the real meaning...it might shock us.
 - ‘*kovod*’ is the Hebrew word that’s used here.
 - And it literally means ‘*to glorify*’...
 - ‘*to give glory*’ to your Father and Mother.
 - We usually reserve that kind of language for God Himself.
 - So you can see just how important...
 - that commandment was to them.
- So this is obviously...one of those times...
 - where Jesus doesn't explicitly declare “*I am God,*”
 - but He does implicitly reveal His divinity...
 - Because He's making a claim on the love of the disciples...
 - that only God Himself can make.
 - And the love of God must come first.
 - Because that’s the first and the greatest Commandment.
- I think that hierarchy...
 - is easy for those of us with faith...
 - to see and understand...
 - but it’s still hard...to put into practice...isn’t it?
 - After all...
 - who do you spend the most time with?
 - who do you know better...
 - and therefore...
 - probably have a better opportunity...to grow deeper in love?
 - Your spouse...your children...your friends.
 - In fact...if we think along those lines...for too long...
 - we might end up agreeing with my aunt!

- But as I sat with all that in prayer...
 - a question formed in my heart...
- *Why do you love...the ones that you love in your life?*
 - Why do you love them?
 - What is it about them...specifically...personally...
 - that causes you to love them more than others?
 - What was it about them...that first attracted you?
 - Was it something about their physical appearance...
 - Was it something about their personality...
 - Maybe it was something they did for you...
 - or in the case of your children...
 - when they were born...
 - maybe it was just...love at first sight.
 - But what was that thing...that first attracted you?
- Now...I know...
 - not all of these things...are going to be good and holy...
 - we're fallen after all...
 - but whenever that particular thing...
 - has lead you to praise and glorify God...
 - you can be sure...
 - it was good and holy.
 - And if you think about it...
 - that thing...
 - that thing that is distinctive to that particular person you love...
 - isn't it also manifesting...
 - just a bit of God Himself.
 - His Goodness...His Truth...His Beauty.
 - So the distinctive thing...that you love about them...
 - at the heart of that...
 - isn't it also the Lord Himself?
- Remember...
 - You and I...are created in the image and likeness of God.
 - So we reflect...just a bit of that glory...
 - which is probably why...that word in Hebrew... '*kavod*'
 - is spot on...for that commandment.
 - We should give glory and honor to our parents.
 - because in doing so...
 - if we do it right...
 - we are actually giving glory and honor to our God...
 - We're seeing Him reflected in them.

- Now let's think about it in reverse...
 - when it comes to our own spiritual journey...
 - the closer we draw to the Lord ourselves...
 - the holier we become...
 - and therefore...
 - the better we reflect...His image and likeness to others.
 - And to the degree that that happens...
 - the more attractive to others we become.
- Think about Mother Teresa of Calcutta.
 - You would never find her on the cover of Vogue magazine.
 - But she was absolutely beautiful...
 - and she attracted...
 - so many different people...
 - of all walks of life...
 - from all over the world.
 - But why?
 - Was it something about her that was so attractive?
 - Or was it the Lord?
 - I think it was both!
 - As she grew in holiness...and became a better image and likeness of the Lord...
 - what was also unique...distinctive...and personal to her...
 - was something...we could all fall in love with...
 - and be drawn closer to the Lord...as a result.
- And why did she love others so much?
 - especially the poor...the suffering...the outcaste?
 - What attracted her to them?
 - She said...it was because...she could see Jesus...suffering in them.
 - She wanted to consol Him!
 - Did those she minister to...
 - feel any less loved...
 - because her focus was on the Lord?
 - Not a chance!
 - Because that love...it was also deeply personally...
 - and directed specifically to them.
- So it might be good this week...
 - to think about what attracts you to others...
 - is it leading you to praise and glorify God?
 - Is it leading you to better see the Lord in them?
 - And how are you doing...
 - at reflecting the love of the Lord to others?
- Both of these...
 - are graces we should be asking for...
 - in our daily prayer.