

✠ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

One of the Pharisees, a scholar of the law, tested Jesus by asking,

“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?”

He said to him,

“You shall love the Lord, your God,

with all your heart,

with all your soul,

and with all your mind.

This is the greatest and the first commandment.

The second is like it:

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.”

The Gospel of the Lord. R./ Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

Commentary

The Pharisees are often portrayed in the gospels as micro-managers of the law. There were literally hundreds of laws governing nearly every aspect of life. So, a scholar approaches Jesus and calls him teacher, yet the Pharisee intends to test him. Jesus first quotes Deuteronomy 6:5, the commandment to love God. He doesn't stop there, as he then recites Leviticus 19:18 to love your neighbor. Loving others is like loving God. In fact, loving others is one way to demonstrate our deep love for God. The two are now very closely linked because of this master teaching by Jesus.

At baptism, parents are asked if they are ready and willing to accept the responsibilities to raise the child as Christ has taught us, to love God and love one's neighbor. Proclaiming this Gospel at the wedding liturgy will underscore the very basic mission of a Christian—to throw one's entire heart, mind, and soul into loving God, and then to seek to love all others. It will make a subtle connection between baptism as the first sacrament and this sacrament of matrimony. Marriage is not explicitly noted in this passage, yet the connection is natural. Couples with a genuine commitment to improving their community and the well being of others will especially resonate with this passage.