

2021 October 31

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings:

First: Deuteronomy 6.2-6, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone" (4)

The Psalm: 18, "Exalted be the God of my salvation." (46b)

Second: Hebrew 7.23-28, "He has no need to offer sacrifices day after day." (27a)

The Gospel: Mark 12.28-34, "You are not far from the kingdom of God!" (34b)

"Hear, O Israel"

I wonder if at all any of us properly understood the most important commandment, 'love your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and might, and your neighbor as yourself!' Jesus came to teach this one law, and all his life on earth he was doing this alone through his word and deed, and through his living this law. How many of his disciples understood this law properly? Reflecting on our lives, most of us cannot claim that we know and observe this law of Jesus, which is the only commandment he has for us. In fact, none of us can fully comprehend the dimensions of this law and none of us will ever love as Jesus loved. Hence, there is no point in aspiring for the impossible.

However, we can and must genuinely attempt to walk toward it, toward the love Jesus commanded and to love as he loved. The command of Moses to the people of Israel at the time of his departure from earth was, this one commandment of God. Jesus' parting message was the same: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." (John 13.34) Different from most Pharisees who approached Jesus with questions, this one today was genuine and sincere in his query regarding the most important commandment. He knew it but wanted a confirmation from Jesus. He got it, grasped properly and understood Jesus, which immensely pleased Jesus.

This Pharisee's encounter with Jesus teaches that whenever we approach Jesus with our queries, needs, worries and even complaints, we must be genuine, willing to listen and tell him or to ourselves what we understood from the revelation he imparts to us. Every time we listen to the word of God, we could exercise by repeating to ourselves or to Jesus what we understood from listening and thereby be in touch with the living Jesus, allowing him to convert and transform us. Thus, we could be open to the word of God and be converted rather than trying to convert God to our views or demands. And when we place above everything else the love Jesus taught, joining our minds with him will be a lot easier.

Jesus loved us, he loves us, and he is love. This Jesus, who is love, is living. He was there yesterday, is here today, and will be there tomorrow. Hence, we do not have any difficulty to relate with him any time, anywhere. Our bad behaviours, our sinfulness and the devil will prompt us to keep away from Jesus. The beauty of the love, which Jesus is, is that despite our despicable sins, he loves us as if we have never sinned and keeps us close to his chest. Forgetting our sinfulness and our abject poverty of the soul, let us try to love Jesus with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our understanding, and thus always be in his embrace. The easiest way to love Jesus is to love your sister and brother living next door, those walking your streets.

Fr. George