

FROM FR. CHRIS ALIMAJI'S DESK

Reflections on Growing in God's Love and Caring for our Neighbors

Our Bible Readings this weekend are Deuteronomy 6:2-6; Hebrews 7:23-28; Mark 12:28b-34; and Psalm 18. This is the Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B. Only four Sundays and we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King of the Universe, and begin a new Pastoral Year.

We are all created in the image of God. Out of his love for us, God created us. He gave us the Ten Commandment, which the Torah, the Pentateuch, the Jewish sacred writings and the Law, multiplied into 613 Commandments. Lovers of the OT bible studies can follow this up! The Lord Jesus, however, pairs them into two: love of God and love of neighbor. Conversely, the whole Law is summed up in one word, LOVE. "...There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mk 12:29-31). Jesus paid the ultimate price of love by his expiatory sacrifice on the Cross. We are therefore challenged to show self-sacrificial love for God and for our neighbor as well. As you read this Reflection, you have to show how your love for God is expressed in your love for your neighbor.

The first step to wisdom and life is to obey God's statutes and Commandments. There is what is called the Jewish Breastplate or Catechism which every Jew must know and recite. It is the Mosaic injunction, as it were, the Great Commandment. "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone! ... (Deut. 6:4-9). Who has tried to obey God faithfully and failed? On the contrary, I can testify to you how often I have relied on God and succeeded. My life is a whole bunch of godly testimonies. How about you? Search your life and see all that God has done for you, both when you were faithful, and those times you were unfaithful to Him. God still claims you as his beloved child.

Christianity: Our religion is Christianity. Jesus Christ, "because he remains forever, has a priesthood that does not pass away." (Heb. 7:24). How many people believe and trust this? We approach the Father through Jesus Christ. He is the perfect high priest: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, higher than the heavens." (Heb. 7:26, 28). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the perfect high priest *per excellence*. This is what makes Christianity greater than any other religion. They may have aspects of goodness, truth, no doubt. But this religion, founded by Jesus Christ and perfected by his love, through the shedding of his blood as an expiation for the sins of the world, is the most excellent religion. Christ died from violence. John 3:16 says: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, ..." How Excellent, How Excellent, is thy loving kindness, O Lord!

Conclusion: Following the words of the Gospel today (cf. Mk 12:28-34), let us also love our God who has maintained his love for us. Let us also love our neighbors for the sake of God too. With that there will be abundant peace, harmony and love in all our world. See the amount of violence everywhere. Many people are hurting. We need the healing of our memories from violence, and not to see violence as a way of life. With that, we will not be far from the kingdom of God too. And who will dare ask God any more questions?