

# THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

YEAR A

## PRAYER OF THE DAY:

O God, we cannot see you  
yet you call on us to love you,  
even as we know you love us.  
Make us understand  
that everybody  
without exception  
is precious to you,  
and that to love them  
is to love you.  
Let us not be bothered  
about what we like  
and do not like  
but be awake to the needs  
of all the people we meet,  
just as Jesus did  
and who is now  
living with you,  
forever and ever.

## FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

Our readings focus on love of neighbor. In cycle C the commandment found in today's Gospel is coupled with a reading from *Deuteronomy* which puts the Sunday focus on love of God and neighbor. Here in cycle A, our first reading gives us a list of commandments relating to the treatment of others. The list includes foreigners, widows, orphans, the poor. In short, we are commanded to love everyone and to take special care of those in need.

The Gospel is a simple, straightforward presentation of the "greatest commandment." The focus is clear. Love of God and neighbor is not merely an option but the definition of what it means to be Christian.

## FIRST READING: *Exodus 22:21-27*

*This is a reading from the book of Exodus.*

Our God says:

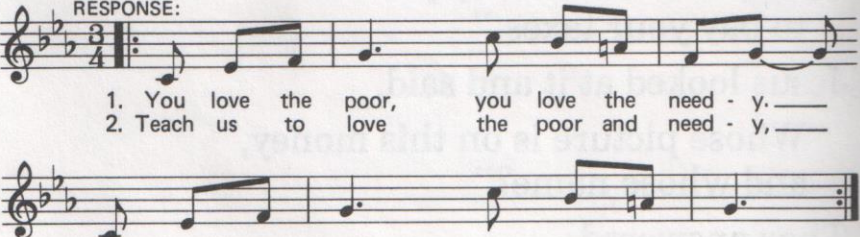
"When there are foreigners  
and strangers living among you,  
you must never do anything to hurt them.  
Remember that you used to be strangers  
in the country of Egypt.  
And don't do anything  
to hurt widows and orphans.  
If you do hurt them, and they cry out to me,  
I will listen to them, and I will help them.  
But I will punish you.

"When you lend money  
to people who are poor,  
don't make them pay back  
more than they owe you.  
And if you take their coat  
as a promise that they will pay you back,  
don't keep it overnight  
because they will need it to keep warm.  
If they cry out to me, I will help them,  
for I love the poor and will take care of them."

*The Word of the Lord.*

## RESPONSE: *Psalm 113*

RESPONSE:



1. You love the poor, you love the need - y. —  
2. Teach us to love the poor and need - y, —

1. You give them help, you care for them.  
2. to give them help, to care for them.

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

Leader: All: (sing and clap)

1. Love God with all your heart: { Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!  
2. Love your neighbor as your-self: }

## GOSPEL: *Matthew 22:34-39*

*This is a reading from the Gospel of Matthew.*

One day, a lawyer,  
who belonged to a group called the Pharisees,  
asked Jesus this question:

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

Jesus said,

“You must love God with all your heart,  
and with all your soul,  
and with all your mind.  
This is the first  
and most important commandment.  
And the second one is like it:  
you must love your neighbor  
just as you love yourself.”

*The Gospel of the Lord.*

## REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

At first glance this may seem a simple Gospel to reflect on with children. But, remembering that children take our words very seriously and often literally, we will want to exercise caution. I recall a vivid experience with this very text. After hearing Sister say that we “must love God more than anyone,” one little first grade child went home crying. Finally that evening, she told her parents that she thought God didn’t love her because she loved them (her parents) more than she loved God. And quite naturally so! Fortunately, the parents were very understanding and had the kindness to tell Sister what happened. When she shared this with the rest of the faculty, it was a learning experience for all of us!

With this caution in mind, let us proceed to our reflection on the Gospel. Rather than dwelling on how much we love God, we might explore with the children ways which we show our love for God:

- in our prayer,
- at mass,
- at home,
- with others, by telling them about the good things that happen (instead of the bad),
- by having a joyful disposition,
- by showing gratitude for God’s gifts,
- by showing respect for the things God created and using them respectfully.

We might also explore how we show our love for our neighbor. The children will be able to make many suggestions.

The minister of the Word will want to keep the children focused on ways they can show love of neighbor which are truly possible for them. For example, they *cannot* feed the hungry of the world, but they *can* share their “goodies” generously with others.

They *cannot* make global peace, but they *can* work for peace in their families and with their playmates. What is important is that the children realize that when they show love for others, they are also showing love for God.