

## 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

### GOSPEL

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When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees they got together and, to disconcert him, one of them put a question, 'Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?'

Jesus said, 'You must 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 resembles it: You must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the prophets also.'

(Matthew 22:34-40)

### DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The commandment that Jesus quotes first is part of a famous Jewish declaration of faith known as the *Shema* from Deuteronomy 6:4: 'Hear O Israel, the Lord, our God, is one ...' This text is written out and placed inside small boxes called *mezuzah*, which are placed on the door posts of Jewish homes. Each time a person passes through the door, they touch the mezuzah, thus making this declaration of faith several times a day.
- The second commandment quoted comes from Leviticus 19:18. Both statements are part of the Jewish Law.
- The term 'the Law and the prophets' implies the whole teaching of Judaism. The books of the Law, known as the Torah, are the first five books of the Bible, often called the Pentateuch.

### EXPLORING THE WORD

This is the final public encounter between Jesus and his enemies in Matthew's Gospel. They are seeking to expose his lack of professional knowledge of the Scriptures or to trap him into giving more weight to one of the Ten Commandments, which are viewed as equally important. Jesus cuts the ground from under them. No one could argue with his answer!

But if the dual command of love was present in the Jewish Law, what new thing did Jesus bring? His originality places love of God and love of neighbour together. It is not possible to love God and despise people. God and the human situation are intimately interwoven. This is shown most perfectly in the person of Jesus himself: Son of Man and Son of God; fully human and fully divine. Followers of Jesus must also embody the dual commandment of love.

- Do you find it easier to love God or love other people?
- Are there ways you can make your response to the great commandment more balanced?

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- Do you struggle with achieving a balance between the two commandments? Is it easier to love God and ignore those around you, or are you drawn to people but find it difficult to be truly attentive to God?
- The term 'love' can be overused and undervalued in today's world. Discuss some of the abuses of the word 'love' that are common.
- At the end of each day this week, spend a few moments reflecting on how you experienced God's love today and how you extended God's love to others.
- In his first letter to the Corinthians (13:4-6), St Paul describes what love is like in a beautiful passage in his first letter to the Corinthians. Pray over these verses this week and contemplate their meaning:

*Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous.  
Love is never boastful or conceited;  
it is never rude or selfish;  
it does not take offence and is not resentful.  
Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins, but  
delights in the truth.  
It is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope,  
to endure whatever comes.*

