

Homily for October 26, 2008
Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Exodus 22:20-26

1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10

Matthew 22:34-40

There are some quotes from scripture that you can buy as prints to frame and hang on your wall:

God is love...

Love is patient, love is kind...

Peace I leave with you...

The Lord is my shepherd...

Some bible verses get embroidered on pillows or throws. Here's the one from the sofa in my living room:

(My mother had a framed print of the same quote by the front door of her home.)

You might even find a framed edition

of Jesus' words in today's gospel:

*You shall love the Lord your God,
with all your heart, with all your soul,
and with all your mind.*

And you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Can't you see that in flowing calligraphy,
rolling across the page?

But I'll bet you won't find a decorator's version of anything from today's first scripture:

*You shall not molest or oppress an alien,
You shall not wrong any widow or orphan,
You shall not act like an extortioner.*

*If you wrong your neighbor
my wrath will flare up and I will kill you!*

Are those the words you want on your pillow?

See how we tend to love the lovely verses of scripture but shy away from the verses that put a fine point on what God's love demands of us.

Perhaps we do this to avoid the "difficult" words in the bible.

Maybe we do it to absolve ourselves of wrongdoing we don't want to face.

Maybe we're avoiding facing life's tough questions
and Christ's hard sayings
when raising a family; or in our politics;
or in conversations with colleagues at work or out with friends.

No doubt about it – the bible call us to love:
to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves.
But the Lord takes this so seriously
that he makes love - a commandment.
In God's eyes: love is the *law* – not the way *around* the law.
That might bear repeating:
In God's eyes: love is the *law* – not the way *around* the law...

In my [homily](#) last week I listed
some of the social and moral concerns
we need to consider when deciding how we're going to vote:
anything opposed to justice and life itself:
murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia;
violations of the integrity of the human person;
insults to human dignity; subhuman living conditions;
the selling of women, men and children as tools for profit...

These are the contemporary equivalents
of the concerns in today's passage from Exodus
about aliens, widows, orphans
and the man who has only a coat for shelter.
Such are the fine points, the cutting edge of the law of love.

In the gospel Jesus calls us to a love that reaches out
-heart and soul and mind- to the needs of others.
The love Jesus enjoins on us asks for nothing less than everything.
And for Jesus – that's the law!

Before we pray the intercessions and move to the table of Eucharist,
(where Jesus gives nothing less than everything out of love for us)
our cantor will sing a song of the Lord's calling us to love.
The lyrics are gentle but strong
and draw us to the depths of the love Jesus asks of us.

The two great commandments in the gospel today
are more than an invitation,
they are like the title of this song, a *summons*.
If you'd like to follow the lyrics, or join in singing,
it's number 380 in your hymnal.

- Rev Austin Flemi

The Summons

*Will you come and follow me
If I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
And never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
Will you let my name be known,
Will you let my life be grown
In you and you in me?*

*Will you leave yourself behind
If I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
And never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
Should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer
In you and you in me?*

*Will you let the blinded see
If I but call your name?
Will you set the pris'ners free
And never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean,
And do such as this unseen,
And admit to what I mean
In you and you in me?*

*Will you love the 'you' you hide
If I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
And never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
To reshape the world around,
Through my sight and touch and sound
In you and you in me?*

*Lord, your summons echoes true
When you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
And never be the same.
In your company I'll go
Where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
In you and you in me.*