

30TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
OCTOBER 29

EXODUS 22:20-26

PSALM 18:2-3,3-4,47,51

MATTHEW 22:34-40

In Calcutta, India, there is a children's home named Shishu Bhavan (Children's Home), founded by Mother Teresa. The home continues to be operated by her community, the Missionaries of Charity. On the wall of the home hangs a sign which reads:

People are unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered.LOVE THEM ANYWAY.If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives.DO GOOD ANYWAY.If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies.SUCCEED ANYWAY.The good you do will be forgotten tomorrow.DO GOOD ANYWAY.Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable.BE HONEST AND FRANK ANYWAY.What you spent years building may be destroyed overnight.BUILD ANYWAY.People really need help but may attack you if you help them.HELP PEOPLE ANYWAY.Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth.GIVE THE WORLD THE BEST YOU'VE GOT ANYWAY.

Mother Teresa counsels her young novices that the challenges offered by this sign can be met only if human beings are motivated by a love and a respect for one another which looks beyond faults, differences, ulterior motives, success, and failure. Mother Teresa once said of herself, "By blood and origin, I am all Albanian. My citizenship is Indian. I am a Catholic nun. As to my calling, I belong to the whole world. As to my heart, I belong entirely to the heart of Jesus." It is this relationship of belonging and the loving service, which grows out of that belonging which the Scriptural authors called Covenant.

The central theme of today's readings is the greatest Commandment in the Bible, namely, to respond to God's Infinite Love for us by loving Him, and to express that love in action by loving Him in our neighbor. The first reading, taken from Exodus, explains the different expressions of the love of one's neighbor, especially of the underprivileged. Today's Responsorial Psalm (Ps 18) is our hymn of loving trust in God who loves us and gives us everything so that we can give it all back to Him in loving His children. Therefore, we sing, "I love You. O Lord, my Strength, O Lord, my Rock, my Fortress, my Deliverer!" In the second reading, St. Paul praises the Thessalonian Christians for the heroic witness they have borne to Christ by their loving reception of Him through Paul's message, which has resulted in their model practicing of mutual love. In the Gospel today, Jesus combines the commandment to love God with the commandment to love one's neighbor and gives the result as the one Commandment of supreme importance in Christian life.

Loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength as our response to His Love for us means that we should place God's will ahead of ours, seek the Lord's will in all things, and make it paramount in our lives. There are several means by which we can express our love for God and our gratitude to Him for His blessings, acknowledging our total dependence on Him. We need to keep God's commandments, and offer daily prayers of thanksgiving, praise and petition. We also need to read and meditate on His word in the Bible and accept His invitation to join Him in the Mass and other liturgical functions when we can.

God's will is that we should love everyone, seeing Him in our neighbor. Since every human being is the child of God and the dwelling place of the Spirit of God, we are actually giving expression to our love of God by loving our neighbor as Jesus loves him or her. This means we need to help, support, encourage, forgive, and pray for everyone without any discrimination based on color, race, gender, age, wealth, personal attractiveness, or social status. Forgiveness, too, is vital. We love others by refusing to hold a grudge for a wrong done to us. Even a rebuke can be an act of love, if it is done with the right heart. We also express love through encouragement and by helping each other to grow. We express agápe love, seeking the true good of another, by meeting a need that God has given us the power to meet, by comforting each other, by teaching each other, and by sharing the Gospel in deeds and in words. We express our love for our neighbor by waiting upon the aged, nursing the sick, patching up quarrels, and listening to the broken-hearted. In short, loving our neighbor is feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, meeting the basic needs of the poor, helping the unemployed, educating the young, and taking care of the old.