

**ECHOING GOD’S WORD  
IN  
THE CATHOLIC FAITH COMMUNITY  
THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

**November 3, 2024**

**SCRIPTURES:**

Deuteronomy 6:2-6

The Lord is One; That One calls us to love

Hebrews 7:23-28

The priesthood of Christ is not limited by time.

Mark 12:28-34

Jesus teaches the Law of Love.

**READ THE SCRIPTURES:**

*Read the Scriptures carefully in your group beginning with the Gospel. Take a few minutes in silence to hear the Lord speaking to the heart. Remember that the word of God in the Bible is primarily addressed to the Church community. What does God want the community to hear today?*

**SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND:**

**Deuteronomy:**

Literally, this book is “the Second Law” (of Moses). It is the last of the five books of the Hebrew Torah. Ascribed to Moses, perhaps by some editors of the post-Exilic Period (after 539 B.C.E.), the Book of Deuteronomy summarizes the Law of God and puts it into organized form. Most of its content has already appeared in other places in the first four books. Here, the people are called to love the Lord above any other. Continued prosperity depends upon faithfulness to this command. Verses 4-9 form the famous Shema or “Hear” prayer (“Hear, O Israel!....”) that devout Jews utter daily at home and in the synagogue.

**Hebrews:**

The priesthood of Jesus is superior to that of the Temple priests for two reasons: 1. That of Jesus is eternal, thus, his sacrifice needs to be offered only one time, whereas the Temple priests, being mortal, must pass on to others the offering of sacrifice. 2. Because of his unique holiness, the sacrifice offered by Jesus cannot be overshadowed by the sacrifices of the Temple.

**Mark:**

The rabbis had identified 613 commandments in the Jewish Scriptures. Debates raged on about the value and order of precedence among those laws. It was not unusual to seek the opinion of any new teacher who appeared on the scene. “Whose camp are you in?” seems to have been the purpose of the question. Jesus quotes first from Deuteronomy 6:4-5 about loving God above all else. Then, he goes on to quote a second commandment, clearly beyond the intent

of his questioner: A second commandment, linked to the first by the word “love.” This second can be found in Leviticus 19:18. The uniqueness of Jesus’ answer seems to be that he did not confine his response to only one commandment. Why not two? Without saying that they are of equal value or rank, he clearly calls attention to both, linking them in emphasis.

The scribe who questioned Jesus and praised him for his response does not exhibit the hostility usually present in those who discuss doctrine with him. This person appears to have an open heart, the kind of attitude that leads Jesus to praise him in return.

This kind of dialogue between Jesus and scribe suggests the exchange that we might profitably engage in with one another as we consider the wonder of God’s laws and the beauty of the word of God. One of the necessary stages in our sharing of the good news is that we share with one another how good God is in giving us this guidance to our conduct. God has not left us in the dark about what is right and how we can best serve the kingdom in our daily living. We cannot go to others with the message of Christ if we have not first savored its flavor.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The people in the Church who teach about love the way Jesus taught it sometimes do not demonstrate that love in their own lives. Parents, priests, religious educators, and catechists must be prime examples of what they teach in the name of Jesus. Has it been your experience that these teachers do demonstrate that love in the way they live? Are you able to forgive them if they did not?

2. Read all of Chapters 6 & 7 of the Book of Hebrews. Do you understand that all baptized Christians do participate in the priesthood of Jesus Christ? What does this mean for you? Through your baptismal priesthood, you, too, have access to God the Father. How does this affect your life of prayer?

3. If our lives are going to be judged in the light of the Great Commandment, what effect does this have on our lives now? If love of neighbor is like love of God, do we have any option about love? Can we love God without loving the neighbor? Do we really love neighbor without also loving God? Does it matter where you begin? Loving God first? Or loving neighbor first?

### PRAYER

Let each person in your group pray aloud the Great Doxology:

**“Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”**

Let the repetition of the prayer go on for several minutes, each person having a chance to say it four or five times.

## CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

The relationship that Jesus had with the religious authorities of his time is often depicted in the Gospels as one of open hostility on both sides. Perhaps, this picture has been greatly influenced by the hostility that rapidly developed between the Jewish leaders and the early Christian community. At the time the Gospels were being written, the Church and official Judaism were in open conflict. It is natural to assume that the Gospel writers were influenced by this negative atmosphere in their selection of materials for inclusion in the narratives. It is possible for us to believe that Jesus himself did not show this open and consistent opposition to Jewish religious tradition that the Gospels portray.

However, we should not underestimate the deeply rooted Judaism of Jesus himself. He was truly a Jew, born of a Jewish mother, schooled in the traditions of his ancestors. He was faithful to his Jewish heritage and always sought to purify it of its departures from the authentic tradition.

His celebration of Passover has become the central act in our worship, the Eucharist. He prayed from the Book of Psalms even as he was dying on the cross. Whereas Israel collectively had long referred to God as its Father, Jesus focused that reference more personally and called God his own Father (Abba) and invited us to do the same. The resurrection of the dead, which is so essential in the Christian belief system, was certainly present in some segments of Jewish thought.

Perhaps, we too often forget that Jesus taught those same tenets that are also at the heart of Jewish religious devotion: prayer, fasting and almsgiving. During the Christian Middle Ages, these practices were more explicitly taught than they are today. We may have become somewhat complicated in our devotional life, at the expense of these basic, life-giving exercises that come to us from the Jewish tradition.

Prayer, fasting, almsgiving can return to the devotional life of Christians.

**See: The Catechism # 575**

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