

ICCH
International Catholic Community of Heidelberg

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October 26, 2014

Today's Readings: Exodus 22:20-26/1 Thessalonians 1:5-10/Matthew 22:34-40

Welcome Father John

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time



The response of Jesus to the Pharisees is one of those beautiful instances in the Gospels where the Divine Wisdom comes forth so clearly from the mouth of Jesus. The Jewish practice was that all of the law should be respected and practiced equally, so a question as to which law was the greatest was truly out of order. Jesus, rather than call them out on a point of order, answers their question in a way that even the Pharisees marveled at, and could find no response to Jesus.

In the Book of Deuteronomy we are told that as the Israelites neared the Promised Land, Moses gathered them together for a long discourse, reminding them of how the Lord had delivered them, cared for them, and given them the commandments on Mount Sinai. In this discourse Moses summarizes the commandments by giving them, what is now known as the great Commandment, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." Deuteronomy 6:5. It was this summary that had become so important and treasured by the Israelites, that Jesus gave as part of his answer to the Pharisees. How could the Pharisees argue with this teaching of Moses with which they were all too familiar, and probably recited several times a day. This alone would have silenced the Pharisees, but Jesus did not end with the Great Commandment from Moses, he adds to it a passage from the Book of Leviticus, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Leviticus 19:18. Jesus presents these two passages as the Greatest Commandments that put all other commandments in perspective of acting out of love, not merely obligation.

This response of Jesus was not meant only for the Pharisees, but is given to all his followers. To love God with all our heart, soul and mind is a call to give the Lord all of our love. It is not enough to love him half-heartedly or to hold back our love. Loving other people or things more than Him is unacceptable. During this time when our culture is so preoccupied with self-satisfaction and materialism, it is easy to want to hold back because it might make us feel good. We can delude ourselves into thinking that we deserve these good feelings or things that we think will make us happy, but in the end we are withholding our love from God. We have the challenge to let go of anything we are holding onto and to love the Lord with all, not half, or seventy-five percent, or even ninety-five percent, our heart, soul and mind. Over and over again we need to remind ourselves to love the Lord with all, all, all ? of our heart, soul and mind.

The second commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves. From that healthy love of ourselves, not selfish or self-absorbed, comes the command to love our neighbors. A healthy love is one that has us look upon ourselves as temples of the Holy Spirit and care for ourselves as living tabernacles. When we look at our neighbors, both literal and figurative, do we see them as temples of the Holy Spirit? Do I see the annoying neighbor, the dirty street person, the illegal immigrant as a Temple of the Holy Spirit? With Jesus love is unconditional and his call for us to love our neighbor as ourselves can be difficult. This teaching is more than a nice phrase for banners, posters or religious greeting cards, it is a teaching we are called to put into

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