

Sunday, October 25, 2026 – Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

First Reading - Exodus 22:20-26

A reading from the book of Exodus

If you are harsh with the widow or the orphan, my anger will rage against you.

The Lord said to Moses, ‘Tell the sons of Israel this, “You must not molest the stranger or oppress him, for you lived as strangers in the land of Egypt. You must not be harsh with the widow, or with the orphan; if you are harsh with them, they will surely cry out to me, and be sure I shall hear their cry; my anger will flare and I shall kill you with the sword, your own wives will be widows, your own children orphans.

“If you lend money to any of my people, to any poor man among you, you must not play the usurer with him: you must not demand interest from him.

“If you take another’s cloak as a pledge, you must give it back to him before sunset. It is all the covering he has; it is the cloak he wraps his body in; what else would he sleep in? If he cries to me, I will listen, for I am full of pity.”

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 17:2-4. 47. 51. R. v.2

(R.) I love you, Lord, my strength.

Second Reading - 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians

You turned away from idols to serve God and await his Son.

You observed the sort of life we lived when we were with you, which was for your instruction, and you were led to become imitators of us, and of the Lord; and it was with the joy of the Holy Spirit that you took to the gospel, in spite of the great opposition all round you. This has made you the great example to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia since it was from you that the word of the Lord started to spread – and not only throughout Macedonia and Achaia, for the news of your faith in God has spread everywhere. We do not need to tell other people about it: other people tell us how we started the work among you, how you broke with idolatry when you were converted to God and became servants of the real, living God; and how you are now waiting for Jesus, his Son, whom he raised from the dead, to come from heaven to save us from the retribution which is coming.

Gospel Acclamation

John 14:23

Alleluia, alleluia!

All who love me will keep my words,
and my Father will love them and we will come to them.

Alleluia!

Gospel - Matthew 22: 34-40

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

You shall love the Lord your God and your neighbour as yourself.

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.’

Intensity of Love is the Issue

Reflection on the Gospel-30th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

(Matthew 22:34-40)

Veronica Lawson RSM

Today’s gospel has Jesus affirming the most central of Jewish traditions, namely the command of Deuteronomy 6 known as the Shema (so called from the first word in the statement meaning “hear”). The words of the Shema are recited repeatedly every day by every faithful Jew: “Hear, O Israel: YHWH is our God, YHWH alone. You shall love YHWH your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.” Although not a prayer in itself, the Shema is an integral part of Jewish liturgy and prayer. It is a creedal statement that continues to function like an overture to Jewish life and practice. The doorpost at the entrance to a Jewish home generally features a tiny rectangular box known as a mezuzah. It contains a scroll bearing the text of the Shema. Those who enter touch the mezuzah with the greatest reverence. When I first encountered this practice, I was deeply affected by the power of the symbol to link one with the deep story of Judaism.

In Matthew’s story, Jesus the Jew provides an honest response to the less than honest questioning of an expert in Jewish law. He overlooks the hostility of the lawyer and evokes the text of the Shema. Jesus thus invites the lawyer to return to the heart of their shared tradition. He links the teaching of the Shema on wholehearted love of God with a second commandment taken from Leviticus 19, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself”. The lawyer’s unfair “testing” of Jesus is evidence that this is precisely what he fails to do: he addresses Jesus as teacher, a term of respect, and yet fails to show him the respect due to him as neighbour.

For Jesus, the Law and the prophets can be summed up in the commandments to love God with all of one’s being and to love one’s neighbour as oneself. Not just love, but intensity of love is the issue here. One is to care for others as one cares for oneself. We see such intensity of love in those who are prepared to risk their lives for others: dedicated health professionals and countless first responders such as paramedics and fire-fighters. During the COVID pandemic, front-line health workers were three times more likely to be infected than others and yet few hesitated to turn up day after day for their patients. The World Health Organisation estimates that some one hundred and eighty to two hundred thousand health professionals lost their lives to the virus. The commitment of such people functions like the mezuzah in our lives: it draws us back into the heart of the gospel tradition and calls us to a deeper, more intense love. It might also help us to deal with the insincerity of those who seek to score points by undermining the dignity of those who work for justice.

