



Thirtieth Sunday Ordinary Time 2005

Exodus 22: 20-26 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10 Matthew 22: 34-40

For those of you who love numbers, the Torah, the great rule of life for the Jewish people, contains 613 commandments; 248 positives, "You shall", and 365 negatives, "You shall not".

With all these instructions covering practically every aspect of life it would be easy to give up or to have difficulties deciding priorities. In the daily prayer of the Jews, the Shema, the people are reminded that the essence of their relationship with God is love, "hear O Israel! You shall love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.:

When Matthew tells of Jesus' response to the lawyer, he changes the last word from *strength* to *mind*. What we can read from this, is that love is to be total self-commitment.

Love of God is to be from the heart; our feelings are important.
Love is to be from the soul; our very depths, our "gut" is important.
Love is to be from the head; our mind is important.

Our total engagement in our love of God means-
our love will be heart-felt but not sentimental,
our love will be active not passive,
our love will be intelligent, but not inflexible.

Most of us when asked would probably have difficulty describing our love of God. Love is a sacramental. It needs outward signs to signify the intangible inward attitude that we call love.

If we look at the lives of the lovers of God whom we call saints, we see aspects of a love that is threefold. Although these people loved God wholeheartedly, they are often remembered for one aspect rather than all three.

Look at three Teresas. Teresa of Avila was a reformer who tried to draw people to a more focused service of God. She believed we needed to be learned so as to avoid the pitfalls of the uninformed. Therese of Lisieux, from her home in a convent poured her heart out in prayer for the world. Teresa of Calcutta devoted her life to the rescue of the most destitute. These women are regarded by the church as very holy and no-one doubts their love of God yet their expression of that love was unique to them.

Being disciple requires formation and this shaping ourselves after the mind of God is something that requires a lifetime. Both Teresa of Avila and Teresa of Calcutta discovered their true vocations in their mid-life journey.

If we are to be the *model* believers that Paul says is our calling, we need to examine our lives against the pattern that tradition places before us.

We are approaching the end of the church's year so some time spent in reflecting on our discipleship will be a valuable experience. Most can't manage a lot of time but even a long walk will provide some *pondering* space.

As we are a community of disciples it would be good to do some sharing with others. Here is a simple pattern to follow.

Where am I/We growing?

in my learning?

Am I becoming more familiar with the God of Jesus found in the Scriptures?

in my prayer?

Is my prayer maturing? Do I need help to enable me to grow?

in my service of others?

Is the Word of God echoing forth from me through my practical love of others, be they family neighbours or the stranger?

Through the mutual support of the group we find strength to renew our commitment to the mission of Jesus. Eucharist is the model of this journey.

We come to the table together to hear the Word of God.

We are fed with Word and Sacrament,
so that we can go out to love and serve the world.

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