

Love Your Neighbor

31st Sunday in Ordinary Time
Cycle B | November 3, 2024

WISDOM FROM THE CELLS

I remember when I was in denial about my addiction. I refused to believe that I had a problem with alcohol and drugs. My mom tried to get me help but I always made excuses to avoid treatment until I got into big trouble, which got me a life sentence in prison because of my refusing to address my weaknesses.

I remember when I was in denial about the pain I caused my victim's family. I refused to believe I did the horrible crime I was convicted of. My being in denial turned to anger, which turned into blaming other people. It was a bad cycle to be going through. Now many lives have been altered forever.

I was in denial about my time in prison in the sense that I could not believe it was happening to me. I was in shock, my life had changed in a second. After a while I came to grasp the situation God has given me as a test of faith.

I realized I was blind in the sense that I thought the old me was completely fine. It took me getting a life sentence to realize I was a very sinful person. It took God to open my eyes to the error of my ways. The only way I could change was to accept God into my heart. And with God in my heart I will make it through everything.

-Steven, who is in a California State Prison.



PENITENTIAL RITE

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life.

R. Amen.

OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray:

Lord,

What you ask of us is difficult. Give us the strength and courage to walk that path by relying on the grace of your loving presence.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. **R. Amen.**



LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading: Deuteronomy 6:2-6

Moses spoke to the people, saying: "Fear the LORD, your God, and keep, throughout the days of your lives, all his statutes and commandments which I enjoin on you, and thus have long life. Hear then, Israel, and be careful to observe them, that you may grow and prosper the more, in keeping with the promise of the LORD, the God of your fathers, to give you a land flowing with milk and honey. "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone! Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you today."

The Word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

Second Reading: Hebrews 7:23-28

Brothers and sisters: The levitical priests were many because they were prevented by death from remaining in office, but Jesus, because he remains forever, has a priesthood that does not pass away. Therefore, he is always able to save those who approach God through him, since he lives forever to make intercession for them. It was fitting that we should have such a high priest: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, higher than the heavens. He has no need, as did the high priests, to offer sacrifice day after day, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did that once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints men subject to weakness to be high priests, but the word of the oath, which was taken after the law, appoints a son, who has been made perfect forever.

The Word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 18: 2-3, 3-4, 47, 51

R. I love you, Lord, my strength.

I love you, O LORD, my strength,

O LORD, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer.

R. I love you, Lord, my strength.

My God, my rock of refuge,

my shield, the horn of my salvation,

my stronghold!

Praised be the LORD, I exclaim,

and I am safe from my enemies.

R. I love you, Lord, my strength.

The LORD lives! And blessed be my rock!

Extolled be God my savior.

You who gave great victories to your king

and showed kindness to your anointed.

R. I love you, Lord, my strength.

Gospel: Mark 12:28b-34

One of the scribes came to Jesus and asked him, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" Jesus replied, "The first is this: *Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.* The second is this: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.* There is no other commandment greater than these." The scribe said to him, "Well said, teacher. You are right in saying, 'He is One and there is no other than he.' And 'to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself' is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." And when Jesus saw that he answered with understanding, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And no one dared to ask him any more questions.

The Gospel of the Lord.

R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.



MEDITATION: LOVING GOD

the long line of
pharisees buying
their sacrificial animals
the vast amount
of money spent
on these oblations

to be clean
to please god
to obey the law

i was sitting
reflecting on my life
i have been
in that line
many times
but do i really
love god?
what does it mean
to love god
passionately?

i went over to where
jesus was gathered
with his friends
the heat of the day
filling the space

jesus saw me
and knew
i was uncomfortable

i came here master
could you tell us
what is the greatest
of the commandments?

jesus sat down
saying
to love god
to love god
totally

and to treat
your neighbor as
you treat yourself

i wondered
how much i really
do love god

master
what you say
is so right
i have been reflecting
about this in my life
to love god and others
is what counts

but with my life
as i now live it
i wonder what
this means
i spend so much money
buying sacrifices
to supposedly
please god
with these offerings
i sometimes wonder
if god really cares
about all this
flowing of blood

rather
master jesus
i think what
touches our heart
is how cruelly
these religious leaders
treat their servants
daily even as
they prepare to
offer their sacrifices
to god

standing here
watching the
religious leaders
deal with their helpers
i think sometimes
they treat their criminals
better

how can anyone say

they love god
with their whole being
when they are
so indifferent
to the misery
of those near them?

jesus
being here
in this place
with you
i see i need to
treat my servants
with more compassion
i see i need
to treat the blind
the crippled
with more
compassion

after reflecting
on the arrogance
of the priests' offering
so many sacrifices
i know i want to
do things differently

to love god
with my whole heart
my whole mind
my whole being
i walked over
to the blind one with
his outstretched hand
put in the two coins
that were reserved
to buy animals
to sacrifice
then walked
to the crippled woman
so advanced in age
and gave her
the rest of my money
i was going to use
so blood could flow
so profusely
so that god

would be appeased
for one more year

jesus
i do desire
to love god totally
i recognize that
i do not know
how to do this

god
i give these coins
to those who
need them
no longer
do i want to believe
that i can win you over
with blood from
these animals

i want to live my day
out of love

god
in this place
in the midst
of confusion
in the midst
of so many
distractions
i tell you that
when i get up
in the morning
as i see the sunrise
let my heart sing
out of love

i feel this love
now for god
and my neighbor
help me to love
those whom i meet
every day with
this same love



REFLECTION: I remember a time when I made a decision without thinking I was going to hurt the person I loved the most in my life... I remember... I remember...

OUR FATHER

Let us pray with confidence to the Father
in the words our Savior gave us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy Kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against
us, and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**R. For the kingdom, the power and the
glory are yours, now and for ever.
Amen.**

SIGN OF PEACE

Jesus, you said to your apostles: "I leave you
peace, my peace I give you. Look not on our
sins, but on the faith of your Church, and
grant us the peace and unity of your kingdom
where you live forever and ever. **Amen.**

The peace of the Lord be with you always.
R. And with your spirit.

LAMB OF GOD

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:
grant us peace.

This is Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the
sins of the world. Happy are we who are called to
his supper.

**Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter
under my roof, but only say the word and
my soul shall be healed.**

COMMUNION

CLOSING PRAYER

Let us pray:

Lord,
Forgive us and help us to make God central in our
lives. Help us to love ourselves enough so that we
will always treat others as we want to be treated
and see you in the least of our brothers and sisters.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. **R. Amen.**

