CELEBRATING AT HOME

30TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Loving God & each other (Matthew 22:34-40)

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Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

The Lord is here, present among us.
We are gathered with the whole Church
in this moment of prayer.

Preparing to hear the Word

We have been called by God
to be the Church,
the Body of Christ and the Kingdom of God
in this world.

Lord, teach us the way of love,
show us the path of forgiveness,
fill us with the Holy Spirit
through Christ, our Lord.

Scripture Reading *(Matthew 22:34-40)*

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.'

Reflection - *Loving God and each other*

Another attempt to trap Jesus is contained in the Gospel this Sunday. Opinions and arguments about which was the greatest commandment were common among the Pharisees and questions about it were frequently asked of rabbis. Clearly, those who asked this question of Jesus were trying to disconcert or 'wrong foot' Jesus in an attempt to discredit him with his reply.

Once again, Jesus does not cleverly sidestep the question; he goes right to the heart of the matter. Love of God and love of neighbour are brought together in one 'great commandment'. In refusing to be drawn into an 'either/or' response Jesus, as he did last week, brings two separate things into right relationship. Love of God and love of neighbour belong together. That's why the first reading today from Exodus warns against mistreating strangers, widows and orphans and talks about the proper conduct of loans and pledges. The warning comes from God's lips. It's not just a nice piece of social philosophy; it is the demand of living our faith.

It means that true faith, as Jesus teaches it, is about being in loving relationship with God and other human beings. Religious rituals are meant to be ways of reflecting on, savouring, remembering, celebrating and expressing that love. Sometimes they just end up as 'empty' rituals, when love has been replaced by fear, or when love is absent.

The Kingdom of God is not some far off place, but the moments when God's life breaks into the human story. Those moments bring love, wisdom, grace, compassion, generosity, forgiveness and peace. Those practiced in the things of God recognise God's presence most of all in loving relationships. If our rituals grow out of and express our sincere love for God and neighbour then they have value. We are always at risk of putting ritual above the practise of love.

Prayers of Intercession

Loving as you love, Lord, hoping as you hope,
walking into the darkness where you walk,
may your love may be clearly seen.

Touch our hearts
that we may bring warmth in the midst of despair.

Spirit of God,
may we be your heart in the heart of the world.

Lord's Prayer

Formed by the teaching and example of Jesus,
we pray:

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.

Closing Prayer

In word and deed,
in sharing our anxieties and our love,
our poverty and our prosperity
we partake of your divine presence, O God.
Empower us with your strength
to live in justice and love.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Blessing

May the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us now and always. Amen.

This resource is presented by the Carmelites for use by individuals, families and small groups as a prayerful celebration of the Word of God to help prepare us to celebrate the Eucharist with our worshipping communities. We are conscious that Christ is present not only in the Blessed Sacrament but also in the Scriptures and in our hearts. We are also conscious of the many people who, for various reasons including sickness and infirmity, cannot physically attend the Eucharist. Even when we are on our own we remain part of the Body of Christ.

In the room you decide to use for this prayer you could have a lighted candle, a crucifix and the Bible. These symbols help keep us mindful of the sacredness of our time of prayer and can help us feel connected with our local worshipping communities.

This text is arranged with parts for a leader and for all to pray, but the leader's parts can be shared among those present.

As you use this prayer know that the Carmelites will be remembering in our prayer all the members of our family.

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