

## Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

It was several months ago when talking to my mother that she asked me if I had watched the show “The View.” I have only seen parts of it from time to time. I am sure many of you have tuned in. For those of you that have not, it is simply a daytime talk show. The topics and events that are discussed are pretty much mainstream.

My mom wanted to tell me about an episode where the topic was on love. She said that Joy Behar, (one of the main hosts of the show) had jumped into the discussion and was talking about how, when growing up you didn’t say “I love you.” You simply didn’t express that emotion. She went on to say that if it did happen, (that love was expressed in her house) it was done at the dinner table when her mom would simply look at you and say: “Do you want some more meatballs.”

Of course my mom and I were laughing after she told the story because there was a great deal of truth to it. In my generation, at least with my parents, that was the way it was. I don’t believe my dad ever told me he loved me, but I knew he did; deeply.

As I read the readings for this Sunday and Jesus’s reiteration of two of the commandments: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and you shall love your neighbor as yourself I couldn’t help but be struck by what that means for many of us. I know it can be different from person to person. Love of God and neighbor can be expressed differently by many of us.

How (I thought) do I try and shed some light on what it is to love God with heart, soul and mind. I felt stuck trying to explain what that might look like, until I went to prayer the other morning.

If you have ever prayed the Liturgy of the Hours you know that on feast days, solemnities and many Sundays, “Morning Prayer” of the Liturgy of the Hours begins with Psalm 63: 2-9. As I sat and prayed it this week I was struck with how the Psalmist writes and prays on how he loves God. Let me read you the psalm, it is considered to be perhaps the most beautiful psalm in the Psalter:

“O God, you are my God, for you I long,  
for you my soul is thirsting.  
My body pines for you  
like a dry, weary land without water.  
So I gaze on you in the sanctuary  
to see your strength and your glory.

For your love is better than life;  
my lips will speak your praise.  
So I will bless you all my life,  
in your name I will lift up my hands.  
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet,  
my mouth shall praise you with joy.

On my bed I remember you.  
On you I muse through the night  
for you have been my help;  
in the shadow of your wings I rejoice.  
My soul clings to you;

your right hand holds me fast.”

What do you hear, what do you feel? Here are some things that I hear and feel when praying it:

A Longing, thirsting for God  
A Reverence and awe of God  
Praise of God  
A life long commitment to love God  
Constant thoughts of Him  
A Never ending giving of self to Him  
Dependence on Him  
Trust in Him  
Protection with Him  
An attachment to God  
A love for God

I asked myself, is this what Jesus means? A life given completely to God. Is that within our reach?

St. Augustine will write the following in regards to this Psalm:

See ye one longing, see ye one thirsting, see ye how he cleaveth to God. Let there spring up in you this affection. If already it is sprouting, let it be rained upon and grow: let it come to such strength, that ye also may say from the whole heart, “My soul hath been glued on behind Thee.” Where is that same glue? The glue itself is love.

Loving God with our whole heart is the first and greatest commandment and loving our neighbor as ourselves, wishing them the good that we want done to us is second.

Why does Jesus place such importance on these two commandments?

One biblical commentator answers the question when he writes: For all the precepts of mercy, and all the other virtues, natural and supernatural, have to do with these two commandments of love to God and our neighbor, and are contained in them. The precepts of faith, hope, and charity, and of religious worship, are included in love to God. The precepts of justice, truth, fidelity, friendship, mercy and gratitude, are included in love to our neighbor. Christ, therefore, signifies that these two precepts ought to be always in every one’s heart, and ought to direct their whole life.

Love of God, love of neighbor, it is what we are made to do, it is what we are commanded to do.