

Homily notes:

25th October 2020 - 30th Sunday in OT Year A 2020

(1st: Exodus 22:20-26; 2nd: 1 Thess 1:5-10; Gospel: Matthew 22:34-40)

It was the Beetles who sang ‘all you need is love’, and Eliza Doolittle in ‘My Fair Lady’ sang ‘don’t talk of love show me.’ both encapsulating as Jesus does in one pithy and punchy sentence the very heart of the Torah, the Jewish Law, and the entire OT prophets, the way of life for all of us.

In Jesus’ day it was customary for rabbis to be challenged to compress the Torah into a short pithy and memorable aphorism. One summarised the law like this: *‘What you hate for yourself do not do to your neighbour.’*

Jesus in Matthew, near the end of the Sermon on the Mount (7:12) put it; *‘So always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the Law and the Prophets’*, or in another translation; *‘In everything **do** to others as you would have them do to you.’*

St. Paul wrote, *“If you love your fellows you have carried out your obligations of Law”* (Rom.13:8), and *“Love is the one thing that cannot hurt your neighbour: that is why it is the answer to every one of the commandments”* (Rom.13:10).

Love then becomes the Law in all its fullness.

Jesus’ teaching here is not new, that we should love God and our neighbour since they are both stated in the Law of Moses. What is new is that Jesus sees these commandments as the principle behind **all law**, and that he practised them to the full in his own life, loving God by spending hours of prayer with his heavenly Father, and loving us by saying from the cross ‘Father forgive them.’

St Paul in the 2nd Reading picks up how the new Christians in Thessalonica have become imitators of the Lord. This imitation is not just in words but in deeds. God is described (and celebrated) in the psalm as our strength, our rock, our fortress, our saviour, our shield, our mighty help, our stronghold, our saviour. You only have to endure some dreadful times of distress to realise how very beautiful and clear is such a description of God.

However, Secularism is a movement of thought, attitude and behaviour which seeks to render God as irrelevant to the way we live as individuals or in society, trying to live and love without God and forcing religion out of life totally.

Jesus is quite clear: love of **God** is first and leads to love of neighbour. At our baptism, at the opening rite, after asking what name have we been given, the priest says to parents and godparents 'It will be your duty to bring him/her up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us by loving God and our neighbour; and then we are signed with the sign of the cross.

Here we are again, my 2 images of the cross: the **I** crossed out; God first, others second, me 3rd.

Or as we look up the cross to God as we go up the arms stretch out to embrace others. Often the neighbour is not the person we don't know but the one we don't want to know, the person we don't want to love.

There is the challenge.