



CELEBRATING AT HOME

31ST SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

The Great Commandment (Mark 12:28-34)



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Sign of the Cross

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

Amen.

Preparing to hear the Word

Lord Jesus,
you show us the love of God.

Lord Jesus,
you show us how to love one another.

Lord Jesus,
you draw us into the Kingdom of God.

Christ is here,
present among us.

Scripture Reading (*Mark 12:28-34*)

One of the scribes came up to Jesus and put a question to him, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" Jesus replied, "This is the first: Listen, Israel, the Lord our God is the one Lord, and you must 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 must love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these." The scribe said to him, "Well spoken, Master; what you have said is true: that he is one and there is no other. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself, this is far more important than any holocaust or sacrifice." Jesus, seeing how wisely he had spoken, said, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to question him any more.

Reflection - *The Great Commandment*

The first reading from the Book of Deuteronomy and the Gospel today are linked by the words of the Shema – the creed which observant Jews pray every morning and evening. These words come from the Book of Deuteronomy: *Listen, Israel: The Lord our God is the one Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength.*

The title, Shema, comes from the Hebrew word for 'listen', the very first word of the prayer.

In a way, Shema is a call to conversion: to listen deeply with the heart and to respond to God's grace and mercy with love, faithfulness and obedience.

When a scribe asks Jesus, "Which is the first of all the commandments?", Jesus replies by quoting the Shema and then adds a quotation from the Book of Leviticus (19:18), "You must love your neighbour as yourself". According to Jesus, there is no commandment greater than these.

The scribe is impressed by Jesus' reply. His words to Jesus show he has grasped what Jesus means. In repeating what Jesus has just said in his own words, the scribe also adds, "this is far more important than any holocaust or sacrifice". Now it is Jesus who is impressed with the scribe's depth of understanding: that love is the very heart of obedience to God and more important even than ritual worship. The scribe's correct understanding of the Old Testament Law means he is very close to the Kingdom of God.

It also 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, when we are trying to bargain with God, or when we are just 'going through the motions'.

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, of thinking that we are at rights with God just by attending a liturgy, by 'paying God off', in a sense.

The words of Jesus remind us of the importance of the other part of our religious lives – the liturgy of everyday life in which we make present and visible the love, mercy and compassion of God.

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Prayers of Intercession

Lord, in our witness of love, justice and service
give us courage and strength.

In the challenges and the choices we face,
give us your wisdom.

Help us to listen more deeply to you
and to one another.

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

Eternal God,
**strengthen us by your Word,
inspire, nurture and sustain us by your Spirit,
and transform our prayer into action
for the sake of the world.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Blessing

As you bless us, O Lord with your presence,
**may we be your presence for each other.
Amen.**



Journey into the Light

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.



The Carmelites
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