

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

First Reading *Exodus 22:20-26*

The Lord teaches that compassion ought to be shown to the alien and to the poor.

Responsorial Psalm : *Psalm 18:2-4,47,51* The Lord is our strength.

Second Reading *1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10*

Paul tells the Thessalonians that their conversion to the Lord has been an example to all believers.

Gospel Reading *Matthew 22:34-40*

The Pharisees continue to test Jesus with a question about the greatest commandment.

Background on the Gospel Reading

This week's Gospel follows close behind the Gospel read last Sunday.

It is the last of three questions put to Jesus by ***Jewish religious leaders who are trying to trick him into saying something that might get him arrested.*** This reminds us that the context for today's reading is the ***mounting tension between Jesus and the religious leaders in Jerusalem.***

The **Herodians and the Pharisees** asked the **first question, which was about taxes.**

The Sadducees asked the **second question, which was about the Resurrection**

(see Matthew 22:22-33).

The third question, considered in today's Gospel, is ***asked by a Pharisee who asks Jesus about the greatest of the commandments.***

The question requires **Jesus to interpret the Law of Moses.**

The **Mosaic Law consists of the Ten Commandments** and **many additional rules**, numbering **over six hundred**. Adherence to the Mosaic Law, for a devout Jew, is an expression of faithfulness to God's covenant with Israel. The ranking of the Commandments was regularly debated among the teachers of the Law.

Jesus answers the Pharisees' question with a two-fold summary.

Jesus says that **all of the commandments can be summarized in two commandments: love God and love your neighbour.**

Both of these were central elements of the religious tradition Jesus learned from his Jewish community. Indeed these continue to be central aspects of contemporary Jewish religious understanding. Jesus' response to his questioners proposed an integral connection between these two aspects of the Jewish Law. **Love of God finds its expression in our love for our neighbour.**

You shall *love* the *Lord* your *God*
with all your *heart*, with all your *soul*,
and with all your *mind*

- *Matthew 22:37.*

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Making the Connection (Grades 1, 2, and 3)

Gospel Reading *Matthew 22:34-40*

The Pharisees continue to test Jesus with a question about the greatest commandment. Young children are dependent upon concrete expressions of love and care as they grow emotionally and spiritually. Jesus' teaching in today's Gospel affirms that concrete expressions of love for our neighbour are also expressions of our love of God.

Materials Needed

- Pictures of people doing good things—parents caring for children, a bride and groom, children sharing, someone paying for items at a checkout counter, people worshipping in church, and so on (Have at least 10 pictures.)
- Three signs, one with the word *God* written on it, one with the word *Others* written on it, and one sign, larger than the other two, with *Love* written on it

Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Place the *Love* sign on the floor with the pictures placed randomly around it. Discuss the circumstances depicted in each picture and talk about what each one illustrates.
2. Now place the *God* sign and the *other* sign near the *Love* sign. Say: ***All of these pictures can be separated into two groups—loving God and loving others.*** Invite volunteers to separate the pictures into the two categories, placing each picture above the appropriate sign.
3. Say: ***In the Gospel this week, Jesus talked about the importance of doing these two things, loving God and loving others. Let's listen carefully to this Gospel.***
4. Read today's Gospel, Matthew 22:34-40.
5. ***Which two commandments did Jesus say were the greatest?*** (Love God and love your neighbour.)
And which did he say was first? (Love God.)
Why do you think he said that? (If we love God, we will love our neighbour as well. Accept all reasonable answers.)
6. Conclude in prayer together asking God for help to love him and love our neighbours. Pray the Act of Love or the Lord's Prayer.

Act of Love

O my God, I love you above all things with my whole heart and soul, because you are all good and worthy of all my love. I love my neighbour as myself for the love of you. I forgive all who have injured me and I ask pardon of those whom I have injured. Amen.



Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

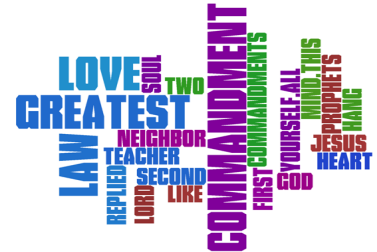
Making the Connection (Grades 4, 5, and 6)

Gospel Reading *Matthew 22:34-40*

The Pharisees continue to test Jesus with a question about the greatest commandment. Older children respond well to challenges to show compassion for others in concrete ways. Today's Gospel teaches that such actions are also expressions of our love of God.

Materials Needed

- Poster of the Ten Commandments
- Paper and pencils
- Basket



Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Show a poster listing the Ten Commandments. Review the Ten Commandments with the group and talk about what each of the Commandments mean. Ask the group to consider the question: ***Which of the Commandments is the greatest of all?*** Allow time to discuss and debate this.
2. Say: ***This same question has been debated by teachers in the Jewish tradition. Some teachers of the Law asked Jesus this question directly. We're pretty familiar with Jesus' reply to them. Let's listen to what Jesus says to them in today's Gospel.***
3. Invite one or more volunteers to read Matthew 22:34-40.
4. ***What did Jesus answer?*** (Love God and love your neighbour.)
Were our answers like Jesus' answer? (Accept all reasonable responses.)
5. ***Jesus' answer suggests that our love of God can be measured by our love of neighbour. The two are closely connected. Loving our neighbour makes our love of God visible.***

Let's make a commitment to each do one thing this week that shows our love of God and our neighbour.

Provide paper and pencils, and allow time for the group to write personal commitments.

6. Collect the papers in the basket and place this basket in your prayer space.

Pray together for God's help to honour these commitments this week and to always show our love for God by loving our neighbour.

Pray the Act of Love.

Act of Love

O my God, I love you above all things with my whole heart and soul, because you are all good and worthy of all my love. I love my neighbour as myself for the love of you. I forgive all who have injured me and I ask pardon of those whom I have injured. Amen.

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A Making the Connection (Grades 7, 8 and 9)

Gospel Reading *Matthew 22:34-40*

The Pharisees continue to test Jesus with a question about the greatest commandment. Young people at this age sometimes question authority and the need for rules and laws. In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus challenges the authority figures of his day—the Pharisees—and summarizes the spirit of the Law.

Materials Needed

- Bibles



Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. ***What laws do you think are the most important laws in our country?*** (laws that prohibit killing, laws that protect our environment, laws that protect our freedom of speech)
2. ***Each of these examples are laws that are essential to maintaining our society. To the Jewish people of Jesus' time, the Law was central to the expression of their faith.***
3. Distribute Bibles and direct the young people to the Book of Leviticus. Explain that this book of the Bible contains many laws for how to live a life of holiness according to Jewish tradition.
4. Invite the young people to browse the Book of Leviticus to locate examples of laws. Ask volunteers to share some examples.
5. Say: ***In this Sunday's Gospel, the Pharisees try to trick Jesus with questions about religious laws.***
6. Have volunteers read aloud this Sunday's Gospel, Matthew 22:34-40.
7. ***How does Jesus answer the Pharisees' question about the Law?*** (He summarizes all the laws into two commandments: love God and love your neighbour.)
8. Say: ***We sometimes think that laws are restricting—that they prevent us from doing certain things. Jesus teaches us that the heart of God's Law is love. The commandments, in fact, free us from those things that get in the way of loving God and loving our neighbour.***
9. Invite the young people to pray aloud the Our Father, remembering that God sent his Son to teach us this important lesson about the law of love.

Interactive Group Activities

scripture Reading: Matthew 22:34-40

LOVE HOP SCOTCH: Play this game with certain boxes with words from today's lesson, especially the word LOVE. Each time a child has a turn, the leader will tell the child which word to NOT jump on. Speed the game up as time goes on as children line up and take their turn.

SCAVENGER HUNT: Write the word LOVE on slips of paper or other items and hide them in a designated area. Tell the children the boundaries of the scavenger hunt area and give them a time limit as a team or as individuals as time and size of the group permits.

LOVE RACE: Divide the children into teams and each team will have a poster to run to, one team player at a time. When it is their turn, they will run to the poster and write the word LOVE with a marker that will be provided. Continue running back and forth until time is up. The team that writes the word LOVE on their poster the most times will be the winner!

HEART LACING: The children will trace two identical hearts, cut them out and use markers and stickers to decorate them. Write the word LOVE several times on the back and front of their heart in both large and small letters. Punch holes around the edge of the heart and lace in and out of the holes with colourful yarn. Before closing the final holes with yarn, stuff some tissues into the heart to make it puffy.

LOVE PLATE: Provide the children with a paper plate and construction paper to cut out mini hearts to tape or glue around the border of the paper plate. Color the plate and write GODS LOVE in the middle, and other words from today's lesson or Bible verse. Hang the plate by a yarn loop at the top.

LOVE BALLOONS: Blow up many balloons before class time and place a slip of paper in each balloon with words from today's Bible verse or prayer. As the children break their balloon, they will begin to put the words in order on a poster board or on the table.

LOVE MEMORY: Write today's Bible verse on a chalk board. Have the children recite the verse several times together and then the leader will begin erasing a word here and there as the children try to recite the verse without those words. See if any children can recite the verse with all the words erased and give a small prize to those who can recite the entire verse.

LOVE IN NOODLES: Give the children construction paper and some type of small noodles to glue onto the paper to spell out GOD'S LOVE in noodles. As an alternative, a happy face made with noodles would be great on their paper as well!

SHARE A SNACK: Give each child a cupcake and a tube of frosting gel. As Children sit in order, have them write one letter on their cupcake with the gel tube to spell the word or words the teacher has written on the chalk board. The words may vary depending on the size of the class. Suggested words are as GOD'S LOVE, LOVE ONE ANOTHER. The children would enjoy having a picture taken of them holding up their cup cakes to spell the words. Hang the picture in the classroom!! And then EAT AND ENJOY the cupcake!