

Homily of Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, 2026

Exodus 22:20-26; Psalm 18:2-4, 47, 51; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10; Matthew 22:34-40

In the first reading, the Israelites had left Egypt and were no longer under Pharaoh and the laws of Egypt. The reading is a section of the guiding rules God gave to the Israelites on how to take care of the weak and the needy among them. The reading mentions aliens, widows, orphans, and the poor.

“You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. You shall not wrong any widow or orphan” (Exodus 20:20-21).

“If you lend money to one of your poor neighbors ..., you shall not act like an extortioner toward him by demanding interest from him. If you take your neighbor’s cloak as a pledge, you shall return it to him before sunset; for this cloak of his is the only covering he has for his body. What else has he to sleep in?” (Exodus 20:24-26).

One would have expected the Israelites who were enslaved in Egypt and who were on their way to the Promised Land to care and love one another. No! It was not long they had left Egypt, that those among them who were more privileged turned on the aliens, the widows, the orphans, and the poor; molested them, oppressed them, and forcefully took what belonged to them; committing among themselves the same sins which the Egyptians committed against them!

The guiding rules God gave to the Israelites are as important to us today as they were for the Israelites. The plight of the poor, the underprivileged, and the venerable in our communities and society cannot be over emphasized. The heartless coveting and forceful possession of what belongs to the people and what should benefit the people, by corrupt and mischievous people, is well known. We continue to pray for the repentance of those who steal, kill, and plunder, and the corrupt and mischievous who oppress the poor, the powerless, the voiceless, and the vulnerable in our society.

On our part, let us always stand for fairness, justice, and compassion.

God instructs in the first reading, “You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.” This statement addresses those who see everyone else as alien except themselves, and those whose behavior depicts superiority, or pride, or entitlement, or lack of compassion, and or indifference to other people’s plight.

Answering the question, “Which commandment in the law is the greatest?” Jesus says, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind... You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments” (Matthew 22:36-40). Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. By doing this, Jesus teaches that love of God is not possible without love of neighbor since human beings are images and likeness of God. Jesus says, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40).

St. John’s letter further explains, “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ but hates his brother is a liar; for whoever does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. This is the commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother” (1 John 4:20-21). This means that the first law, love of God, is determined by the second law, love of neighbor. Where there is no love of neighbor, there is no love of God.

How do I love my neighbor as myself? It is by treating others with the same care, dignity, respect, and concern that you naturally want for yourself. This is called The Golden Rule. Jesus says, "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31).

The Golden Rule has been in existence from the ancient times. A story is told how a prospective convert to Judaism who asked Rabbi Hillel the Elder to teach him the entire Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) while standing on one foot. The Rabbi stood on one foot and answered him, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary. Go and learn it."

The Golden Rule is expressed almost in the same words in other traditions: "That which you hate to be done to you, do not do to another." "What you do not wish for yourself, do not do to others." "Treat others the way you want to be treated."

The message today is that everyone be treated with care, dignity, respect, and concern. It is all about fairness, justice, and compassion; centering on fairness, justice, and compassion.

May God give us the grace. Amen.

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