

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

This is the first commandment, and the second is similar to it.

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 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.

■ The Gospel of the Lord.



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Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / B

31 OCTOBER 2021

GETTING TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER

All too often Christians fall into the trap of characterising the Jewish faith as being legalistic. It is a judgement that is both unfair and inaccurate. It is true that Jesus engaged in sometimes heated debates with other interpreters of the Jewish Torah (Law), and this is reflected in the gospel tradition. At the same time, the gospel tradition attests that, apart from the regulations concerning ritual purity, Jesus agreed with many of his contemporaries about the key values that lay at the heart of their religion.

Poised to enter the promised land after forty years of wandering in the desert Moses takes the opportunity to remind the people what will be required to flourish in the future. Their loyalty to God will be measured by the degree to which they write God's law in their hearts. This is the compass that will guide them in the years ahead and nurture their relationship with the living God.

The great first-century Rabbi Hillel was challenged to explain the Torah while standing on one foot. His reply was "Don't do to others what is repugnant to you. All else is commentary." Asked by a scribe to articulate his view of the greatest commandment Jesus highlights Moses' instruction to love God with all one's heart, mind, and strength adding the command to love our neighbour as ourselves. Hillel, like the ten commandments, focused on avoiding harming others. Jesus' genius can be seen in phrasing it positively in terms of love – our best compass and guide.

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

Deut 6:2-6

A reading from the book of Deuteronomy
Hear Israel, you shall love the Lord with all your heart.

Moses said to the people: 'If you fear the Lord your God all the days of your life and if you keep all his laws and commandments which I lay on you, you will have a long life, you and your son and your grandson. Listen then, Israel, keep and observe what will make you prosper and give you great increase, as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you, giving you a land where milk and honey flow.

'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. Let these words I urge on you today be written on your heart.'

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Ps 17:2-4, 47, 51. R. v. 2
R. I love you, Lord, my strength.

1. I love you, Lord, my strength, / my rock, my fortress, my saviour. / My God is the rock where I take refuge; / my shield, my mighty help, my stronghold. / The Lord is worthy of all praise: / when I call I am saved from my foes. **R.**

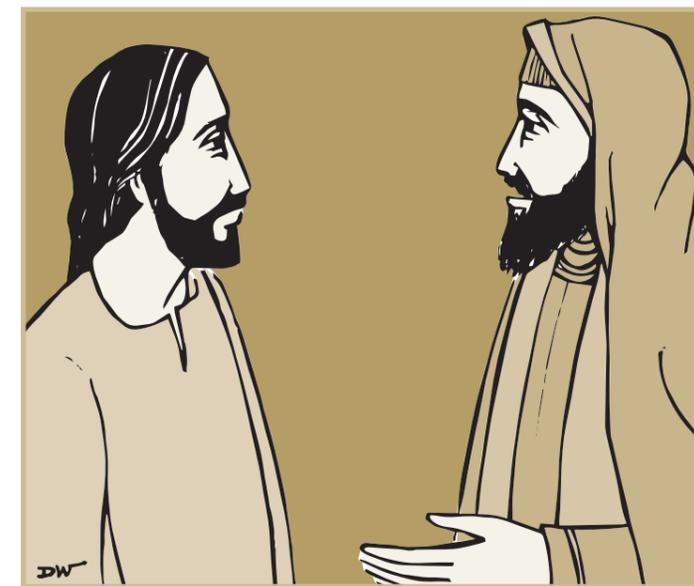
2. Long life to the Lord, my rock! / Praised be the God who saves me. / he has given great victories to his king / and shown his love for his anointed. **R.**

SECOND READING

7:23-28

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews
This one, because he remains for ever, has an eternal priesthood.

There used to be a great number of priests under the former covenant, because death put an end to each one of them; but this one, Christ,



because he remains for ever, can never lose his priesthood. It follows then, that his power to save is utterly certain, since he is living for ever to intercede for all who come to God through him.

To suit us, the ideal high priest would have to be holy, innocent and uncontaminated, beyond the influence of sinners, and raised up above the heavens; one who would not need to offer sacrifices every day, as the other high priests do for their own sins and then for those of the people, because he has done this once and for all by offering himself. The Law appoints high priests who are men subject to weakness; but the promise on oath, which came after the Law, appointed the Son who is made perfect for ever.

■ The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Jn 14:23

Alleluia, alleluia!

All who love me will keep my words,
and my Father will love them, and we will
come to them.

Alleluia!