

Mt 22:34-40; Ex 22:20-26; Thes 1:5c-10 Love Jesus IN Your Neighbor

I awoke to the news: *The Pope is Changing His view on Same-Sex Unions*. But that was a lie. I listened to what he said in Spanish. The pope said children born with a same-sex attraction have a right to be in a family. And, we should have laws to protect those children.

The pope never said we are going to celebrate same-sex unions as a sacrament in the Church.

Some still worry: is that a green light for things to come? No. Our dogma that marriage is only between a man and a woman is a *revealed truth* given to us by God. We do not have the freedom to change that. So this was a case of media misinformation.

But we know what the pope was trying to say. Jesus is saying the same thing today:

The greatest and first commandment is: *You shall love the Lord, our God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind* (Mt 22:37-38). And the second is like it: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself* (Mt 22:39).

Was Jesus adding a new commandment? No. He said: *The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments* (Mt 22:40). In other words, if you obey these two commandments you will fulfill all Ten Commandments.

Look at the first three commandments: You shall have no other gods. You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain. You shall keep holy the Sabbath. Those are about loving God.

Look at the next seven commandments: Honor your father and mother. You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. Those are about loving your neighbor.

But you cannot have one without the other (1 Jn 4:20-21). You cannot love God without loving your neighbor.

They are like the two beams that form the cross. There has to be a balance. You have to balance the vertical beam of your relationship with God (in prayer and sacrifices) with the horizontal beam of your relationship with others (in compassion and service).

How will you love God? Let God love you.

Let God love you when you receive Him in the Holy Eucharist. Let God love you when you go to confession and you receive His mercy. And let God love you when you pray and converse with God throughout the day. I guarantee you...that will transform you.

In the second reading, St. Paul reminds the Thessalonians of how they allowed God to love them in Jesus Christ. And that transformed them from a life of idolatry to a life of serving the living and true God (Thes 1:9)—and that means salvation.

How will you love your neighbor? See Jesus IN them. And love Jesus IN them.

In the first reading, God said Israel shall not oppress...but must love and care for immigrants, widows, orphans and the poor. Why? Because God is a god of love. And now they too must be a people of love.

That is the new standard. At the last supper Jesus will make Himself the new standard. It is no longer *love your neighbor AS YOURSELF*. Now it is: *love one another AS I HAVE LOVED YOU* (Jn 13:34; 15:12).

How has God loved us? God loves us so much, He destined us (before we were even born) to be His adopted sons and daughters through Jesus Christ (Eph 1:5). That means God loves us so much that He sees Jesus IN us and He loves Jesus IN us.

Now Jesus is calling you to do the same thing--see Jesus IN others and love Jesus IN others:

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me (Mt 25:35), naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me (Mt 25:36).

Amen I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers [and sisters] of mine, you did [it] for me (Mt 25:40).

But in order to see Jesus IN others and love Jesus IN others, you must make a deliberate choice. You must choose to put the interests of others above your own. How? Imitate Jesus.

He showed us on that cross: *No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends (Jn 15:13).* So lay down your life of self-interest and live to serve others.

But is that even possible? We aren't Jesus. We aren't saints...yet. But in this mass Jesus will give you the tremendous power of His grace—even if you don't feel it—to become more and more like Jesus.

And, in this mass, Jesus through the priest, will raise up to heaven--the Holy Eucharist and the Cup of Salvation--saying *do this in memory of me.*

That is your calling...that you too...with the power of His grace....will give up your body and pour out your blood...to love and serve your brothers and sisters—for your salvation...for their salvation...and for the greater glory of God.

Let us pray: Lord Jesus Christ as we come up to receive You in Holy Communion, give us the grace we need to let You love us so we can see You IN our neighbor and we can love You IN our neighbor for the greater glory of God.