

## THE THIRTIETH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR – A

In the gospel reading the Pharisees attempt to disconcert Jesus by asking which 'is the greatest commandment of the Law?' Jesus gives them answer quoting from the book of Deuteronomy saying that 'the greatest and the first commandment' is to love God and the second is to 'love your neighbour as yourself.' Jesus then tells the Pharisees, 'On these two commandments hang the whole Law and the prophets.' The second reading gives examples of love of neighbour by showing care for the stranger, the widow, the orphan and the poor. The second reading gives an account of Paul's admiration for the faith of Thessalonians.

The **First Reading** is from the book of Exodus, the second book in the Bible and the second book of the Law. This book has two main themes: the birth and call of Moses and the deliverance of the Israelite people from Egypt and then the Covenant God made with the Israelites at Mt Sinai through Moses, the two are connected by the journey through the desert. The covenant was broken almost as soon as it was made: the people adored the golden calf. But God forgave their sin and renewed the covenant.

The reading, 22.20-26, is taken from the Book of the Covenant a collection of laws and customs not promulgated at Sinai. The laws were drawn up, when the Israelites had begun to settle in the land of Canaan, in the spirit of the Ten Commandments and came to be regarded as the charter of the Siniatic Covenant. The reading is a series of promulgations with regard to one's neighbour. The text makes clear what must not be done and if the laws are broken God will hear the cry of those who appeal to him because he is a God of compassion. The reading prepares us for the gospel reading concerning our love for our neighbour.

The **Responsorial Psalm**, Psalm 17.2-4,47,51, is a king's thanksgiving, a triumphal ode combining a thanksgiving prayer with a victory song. The response begins with words of love and thanksgiving. The Lord is 'my rock' in the sense that God is the Rock of Israel, the bulwark of his people and especially of the Davidic dynasty. The psalm ends with words of thanksgiving for victories in battle for the Lord's anointed.

The **Second Reading** comes from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians. Paul founded the Church in Thessalonica on his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey in the summer of the year 50. He wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians in the winter of 50/51, some of his earliest writing. In the opening chapters Paul writes very affectionately to his converts now undergoing persecution. In the latter part of the letter he gives some practical suggestions including answers to questions about what happens to people when they die and about Christ's Second Coming (the Parousia). This letter along with the second one are important because they give us Paul's teaching about the end of time and also give us Paul's thinking at this time which was, how did Christ's Resurrection from the dead and his Second Coming bring salvation to his converts whether alive or dead?

The reading, 5.5-10, continues on from last week's reading in praise of the Thessalonians. They have followed resolutely Paul's way of life when he was among them and accepted the gospel as the new way to salvation despite local opposition. Paul tells them that as a result of their faith they have become an example to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia (modern day Greece). The word of God sprang out from them 'for your faith in God has spread everywhere.' Paul goes on to say he has no need to tell other peoples about their faith, others peoples tell him. If the gospel is lived it will grow and spread. Paul concludes by proclaiming that the Thessalonians are now the servants of the living and true God and are awaiting the coming of the risen Lord Jesus. These last two points: belief in the one true God and looking forward to the Second Coming of Jesus his Son, are two central themes in Paul's early preaching.