

LITURGY & LIFE
THE EMMAUS JOURNEY

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle A

A Catholic Update Companion to the Sunday Readings

LOVE GOD. LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR.

Receive God's love • Love with the whole self • Recognize the vulnerable neighbor • Make mercy visible

1: FOR THE HOMILIST/PCL OR OCIA CO-ORD.: CHRIST SPEAKS - WE LISTEN

Sunday Readings

READING	SCRIPTURE
First Reading	Exodus 22:20–26
Responsorial Psalm	Psalm 18:2–3, 3–4, 47, 51
Second Reading	1 Thessalonians 1:5c–10
Gospel	Matthew 22:34–40

The Heart of This Sunday's Gospel

THE TWO COMMANDMENTS THAT HOLD EVERYTHING TOGETHER

A scholar of the law asks Jesus which commandment is greatest. Jesus answers by joining two passages of Scripture: love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself. These are not rival duties. Love of God opens the heart to the neighbor, and love of the neighbor becomes a living test of love for God. Jesus does not reduce the Law; He reveals its center. Every commandment, devotion, sacrament, moral choice, and work of justice must be ordered toward communion with God and self-giving love of others.

The Liturgical Thread

Exodus warns Israel not to oppress the alien, widow, orphan, or poor debtor, because God hears their cry. Psalm 18 responds with wholehearted love for the Lord who is strength, refuge, and deliverer. Paul praises the Thessalonians because the Gospel has become visible in their example and their turning toward the living God. Jesus then gathers the whole law into love of God and love of neighbor.

THE MOVEMENT OF THE READINGS

God hears the vulnerable → The Lord becomes our strength → The Gospel becomes an example → Love fulfills the whole law

Listening With the Heart

Listen

Read Matthew 22:34–40 slowly. Listen for the words “all your heart,” “all your soul,” and “all your mind.” Then hear the second commandment: “love your neighbor as yourself.”

Reflect

What receives the greatest share of my heart, attention, and energy? Which neighbor is easiest to overlook? Where has God's love already changed the way I treat another person?

Pray

Thank God for loving you first. Ask for an undivided heart, the grace to recognize Christ in the vulnerable, and courage to practice mercy when love is costly. Name one person or group before God.

Rest

Rest in the love of God. Let that love reach the places in you that are fearful, resentful, tired, or self-protective. Receive before you try to give.

Carry This Word

MATTHEW 22:37-39

“You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart... You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

2: FOR THE CATECHIST: THE CHURCH TEACHES - WE LEARN

Catechetical Focus

THE UNITY OF LOVE OF GOD AND LOVE OF NEIGHBOR

Christian love begins in God, who loved us first and gives us the capacity to love. The command to love God with the whole self calls for worship, trust, obedience, and communion. The command to love the neighbor gives that communion a visible form. The stranger, widow, orphan, debtor, poor person, enemy, family member, parishioner, and inconvenient person all stand within the reach of Christian charity. Love is more than emotion: it seeks the true good of the other through mercy, justice, truth, patience, service, and sacrifice.

Catholic Update Resources

PRIMARY CATHOLIC UPDATE

C0604A | ‘God Is Love’: Pope Benedict’s First Encyclical in Condensed Form

This Update presents the central Christian proclamation that God is love and that the Church’s life flows from receiving and sharing that love. It helps participants distinguish Christian charity from sentiment, showing that divine love unites worship, truth, justice, sacramental communion, and service. The disciple does not manufacture love by willpower alone; love is first received from God and then becomes a vocation.

SECONDARY CATHOLIC UPDATE

C1004A | The Works of Mercy: Heart of Catholic Identity

This Update translates the command to love the neighbor into concrete Catholic practice. The corporal and spiritual works of mercy train disciples to recognize Christ in hunger, thirst, sickness, imprisonment, ignorance, sorrow, sin, and death. Mercy is not optional religious generosity added after the essentials; it is one of the clearest ways the baptized reveal the love they celebrate and profess.

The Catechist’s Companion

Key Teaching

The love we receive from God becomes credible when it reaches the neighbor in mercy, justice, and faithful service.

Session Aim

Help participants understand that love of God and love of neighbor form one inseparable vocation, and lead them to express that love through concrete works of mercy, justice, truth, and service.

Formation Objectives

- Explain how Jesus joins Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18.
- Describe Christian love as a response to God's prior love.
- Distinguish charity from emotion, permissiveness, or vague goodwill.
- Identify the vulnerable neighbors named in Exodus 22.
- Choose one corporal or spiritual work of mercy to practice this week.

Integrating This Week's Catholic Updates

C0604A establishes the source: God is love, and Christian charity begins by receiving His self-gift in Christ. C1004A establishes the practice: the works of mercy give love hands, feet, words, time, and sacrifice. Service without communion with God can become exhaustion; devotion without mercy can become self-enclosed. Authentic discipleship requires both.

Expand the Conversation

- Why does Jesus join love of God and love of neighbor?
- What does it mean to love God with the whole self?
- How does Exodus reveal God's concern for vulnerable people?
- Which work of mercy is most needed in our community?

Common Misunderstandings

- Christian love is not merely a feeling; it is a stable willing and seeking of the true good of another.
- Love of neighbor does not replace worship of God; it flows from and verifies it.
- Love does not mean approving every action. Charity remains united to truth and the moral good.
- Self-love in the Gospel is not selfishness; it recognizes one's God-given dignity and becomes a measure of care for others.
- Works of mercy do not earn salvation; they are fruits of grace and signs of living faith.

Church References

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1822–1829; 2055; 2083; 2196; 2443–2449; 2462–2463. Scripture connections: Deuteronomy 6:4–9; Leviticus 19:9–18; Micah 6:8; Matthew 5:43–48; Matthew 25:31–46; Luke 10:25–37; John 13:34–35; Romans 13:8–10; 1 Corinthians 13:1–13; 1 John 4:7–21; James 2:14–17.

OCIA Connection

OCIA participants often encounter many Catholic teachings at once. This Sunday gives them the interpretive center: every doctrine, sacrament, commandment, and discipline serves communion with God and a life of charity. Initiation is not simply learning Catholic information; it is being incorporated into Christ so that His love becomes visible through worship, moral conversion, community, and mission.

Catechist's Insight

PASTORAL CARE

Keep the two commandments united. Avoid reducing love of God to private devotion or love of neighbor to vague kindness. The first reading names vulnerable people whom God personally defends.

Invite participants to move from abstract love toward one concrete neighbor and one concrete act. Also clarify that love sometimes requires truth, boundaries, correction, and justice; it is not the approval of everything another person chooses.

Invite participants to name specific people rather than discussing “humanity” in general. The neighbor in Scripture is often the person whose need interrupts us or whose difference challenges us. Be attentive to those who have been harmed by distorted appeals to love; Christian charity permits healthy boundaries and seeks justice, safety, and truth.

3: FOR THE CANDIDATE/CATECHUMEN: THE DISCIPLE RESPONDS - WE LIVE

Living the Gospel This Week

- Does my prayer deepen my patience and compassion?
- Whom do I avoid because loving them feels inconvenient or costly?
- Do I notice the stranger, poor person, grieving person, or isolated parishioner?
- Where does love require truth or a courageous boundary?
- Which gift of time, attention, money, or skill can become mercy?
- What part of my heart have I not yet given fully to God?

Choosing to Be an Intentional Disciple

WHAT IS CHRIST ASKING OF ME TODAY?

Which person or need is Christ asking me to stop passing by?

Intentional discipleship begins by receiving God's love and then ordering the whole life around it. The disciple worships faithfully, listens to Scripture, receives the sacraments, forgives, serves, advocates for the vulnerable, tells the truth with charity, and refuses to make indifference normal. Love becomes a daily rule of life rather than an occasional impulse.

Holy Habit

THE TWO-COMMANDMENT EXAMEN

At day's end ask: How did I love God today with heart, soul, and mind? Where did I recognize or overlook my neighbor? Did my words seek the other person's true good? What mercy did I receive? What mercy am I being asked to give tomorrow? Conclude: "Jesus, unite my love for You with my love for every person You place before me."

Faith Into Practice

- Practice one corporal work of mercy.
- Practice one spiritual work of mercy.
- Contact someone who is lonely, grieving, or forgotten.
- Give generously to a ministry serving people in need.
- Offer patient listening without rushing to solve the problem.
- Examine a prejudice that limits whom you treat as a neighbor.
- Pray by name for someone difficult to love.

Personal Reflection

If love of God and love of neighbor truly hold my whole life together, which relationship, habit, or priority must change?

4: FOR THE SPONSOR: THE CHURCH SENDS - WE WITNESS

Sponsor's Path of Accompaniment

Share Your Faith	Share about a time when receiving God's mercy changed the way you treated another person, especially someone difficult, vulnerable, or overlooked.
Walk Together	Ask: "Who has helped you experience the love of God?" Then explore which neighbor or need Christ may be placing before the participant now.
Pray Together	Read 1 John 4:7–12 and Matthew 22:34–40. Thank God for loving first and ask for grace to love in truth, patience, and concrete mercy.
Experience the Church	Visit or learn about a parish ministry that practices a work of mercy—food assistance, bereavement, care of the sick, prison outreach, catechesis, or accompaniment.
Continue the Journey	Each person chooses one work of mercy and one person to remember in daily prayer before the next meeting.

Faith at Home

Create a household "Love in Action" bowl. Write the corporal and spiritual works of mercy on separate slips. Each person draws one and chooses a simple way to practice it during the week. At the next meal, share what happened and pray for the person served.

Parish Life

Invite the parish to examine whether worship overflows into charity. Are newcomers welcomed? Are the poor known personally? Are the grieving accompanied? Are parishioners formed in the works of mercy? Choose one concrete parish practice that joins prayer, relationship, and service.

Go Forth This Week

Love God without reserve, recognize Christ in your neighbor, and make mercy concrete this week.

Prayer for the Week

God of love, You have loved me first and called me into communion with You. Gather my divided heart and teach me to love You with all my heart, soul, and mind. Open my eyes to the neighbor before me—the stranger, the poor, the grieving, the difficult, and the forgotten. Free me from indifference, resentment, and empty words. Let prayer become patience, worship become mercy, truth become

service, and faith become love in action. Through the Holy Spirit, make my life a faithful response to the love revealed in Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Emmaus Insight

The disciple loves God with the whole heart by allowing God's love to reach every neighbor through concrete mercy.