30th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME- A: Love Is a Command: Ex 22:21–27; 1 Thes 1:5–10; Mat 22:34–40

It is said that the Apostle John, when he was very old, would be carried to the Church by his disciples. During the gathering, he would always tell the people, "My dear children, love one another." One day, a disciple asked him, "Master, why do you always repeat the same message?" St. John replied, "Because it is the command of the Lord. And if this is followed, it will be enough."

In today's Gospel, when a Pharisee asks Jesus which commandment is the greatest, Jesus answers clearly: love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself. He concludes, "The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments." But we may ask: **How can love be commanded?** Isn't love something spontaneous and voluntary? If we are commanded to love, can it still be genuine love?

The answer is that love is more than a feeling or emotion. Feelings may change, but true love goes beyond feelings. Love is a decision to give ourselves freely for the good of another person. God showed us this love by giving us His only Son. As **John 3:16** reminds us, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son."

If God is love and God is eternal, love is meant to endure. The enemy of love is not simply anger or disagreement, but selfishness. When we refuse to give ourselves to others, we cannot truly love. That is why Jesus commands us, "Love one another as I have loved you."1 Jn 4:7 says, "Love is God."

Love is not merely something we talk about; it is something we must practice. As St. John says, "Let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth" **(1 Jn 3:18).**

The first reading gives us a practical example of this love. God commands His people not to mistreat strangers, widows, or orphans. He asks them to care for the poor and the vulnerable. In other words, our love for God must become visible in the way we treat people, especially those who are suffering or forgotten.

Our Christian life is like a cross, with a vertical post and a horizontal beam. The vertical post represents our love for God: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." The horizontal beam represents our love for our neighbors.

Without the vertical post, the cross cannot stand. Without love for God, our Christian life loses its foundation. But without the horizontal beam, the cross remains incomplete. Our love for God must be expressed through love for others.

St. John reminds us that anyone who says, "I love God," but hates a brother or sister is a liar." (**1Jn 4:20).** We must learn to see Jesus in others, remembering His words: "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" **(Mt**

25:40). Even when someone is difficult to love, we are called to love that person because we love God.

Let me share a story. There was once a monastery where the monks loved one another deeply. People were attracted to their community, and many young men joined them. But gradually, selfishness, jealousy, and ambition entered their lives. They began to quarrel, and people drifted away. The monastery was slowly dying.

The abbot went to consult a holy hermit, who gave him one message: "The Messiah is among you." Returning to the monastery, the abbot shared those words with the monks. Each monk began to wonder, "Who among us could be the Messiah? Perhaps it is the brother I argued with yesterday. Perhaps it is the cook, the librarian, or the janitor."

From that moment, they began treating one another with greater kindness and respect. Their love returned, their community became joyful again, and people were drawn back to the monastery.

Brothers and sisters, the Messiah is among us, too! Jesus is present in our family members, our fellow parishioners, the poor, the lonely, and even those with whom we disagree.

In the second reading, St. Paul praises the Thessalonians for turning away from idols to serve the living and true God. Their faith became visible through their changed lives. In the same way, our faith must be seen in our loving actions.

Let us remember: the greatest commandment is not complicated. Love God, and love your neighbor. Love when it is easy, and love when it is difficult. Love not only with words, but with sacrifice, forgiveness, kindness, and service. Jesus tells us that the world will recognize His disciples by their love for one another. In **Jn 13:35** Jesus says, **"This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Therefore, let us make this our mission this week: less selfishness, less hatred, less judgment—and more love, more forgiveness, and more compassion.** As St. John taught us, "Love one another." It is the command of the Lord, and if we truly live it, it will be enough." Amen