

GOSPEL

Matthew 22:34-40

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees they got together and, to disconcert him, one of them put a question, 'Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?' Jesus said, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: You must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets also.'

HOMILY OF POPE BENEDICT XVI (EXCERPT)

26 October 2008

The Readings today's liturgy offered for our meditation remind us that the fulness of the law, as all of the divine Scriptures, is love. Therefore anyone who believes they have understood the Scriptures, or at least some part of them, without undertaking to build, by means of their intelligence, the twofold love of God and neighbour, in reality proves to be still a long way from having grasped its deeper meaning. But how can we put this commandment into practice, how can we live the love of God and our brothers without a living and intense contact with the Sacred Scriptures? The Second Vatican Council asserts that "access to sacred Scripture ought to be open wide to the Christian faithful" (Dei Verbum, 22), so that persons, encountering the truth, may grow in authentic love. This is a requisite that is indispensable for evangelization today. And since often the encounter with Scriptures is in danger of being not "a fact" of the Church, but informed by subjectivity and arbitrariness, a robust and credible pastoral promotion of the knowledge of Sacred Scripture to announce, celebrate and live the Word in the Christian community becomes indispensable, dialoguing with the cultures of our time, placing ourselves at the service of truth and not of current

ideologies, and increasing the dialogue God wishes to have with all men (cf. *ibid*, 21). To this end special care should be given to the preparation of pastors, who are then ready to take whatever action is necessary to spread the biblical movement with appropriate means. Ongoing efforts to give life to the biblical movement among lay people should be encouraged, along with the formation of group leaders, with particular attention being paid to the young. We must also support the effort to allow faith to be known through the Word of God to those who are "far away" as well and especially those who are sincerely seeking the meaning of life.

Many other reflections could be added but I will limit myself to underlining that the privileged place where the Word of God resounds, which edifies the Church, as was said many times in the Synod, is undoubtedly the liturgy. This is where it appears that the Bible is a book of the people and for the people: a heritage, a testament consigned to readers so that the salvation history witnessed in the text becomes concrete in their own lives. There is therefore a vital, reciprocal relationship of belonging between the people and the Book: the Bible remains a living Book with the people its subject who read it. The people cannot exist without the Book, because in it they find their reason for being, their vocation and their identity. This mutual belonging between people and Sacred Scripture is celebrated in every liturgical assembly, which, thanks to the Holy Spirit, listens to Christ, since it is he who speaks when the Scripture is read in the Church and welcomes the Covenant that God renews with his people. Scripture and liturgy converge, therefore, with the single aim of bringing the people to dialogue with the Lord and to obedience to the will of the Lord. The Word issued from the mouth of God and witnessed in the Scriptures returns to him in the form of a prayerful response, a response that is lived, a response that wells up from love (cf. Is 55: 10-11).

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Dear brothers and sisters, let us pray that from renewed listening to the Word of God, guided by the action of the Holy Spirit, an authentic renewal in the universal Church and in every Christian community may spring forth... May Mary Most Holy, who offered her life as the "servant of the Lord" (Lk 1: 38), so that everything would happen according to the divine will and who exhorts us to do whatever Jesus would tell us (cf. Jn 2: 5), teach us to recognize in our lives the primacy of the Word that alone can grant us salvation. Amen!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: What does it mean to find your reason for being, your vocation, and your identity in the Bible? Is this true for you?



Heart: Have you experienced God speaking to you through the Bible? What happened?



Hands: Reflecting on your experience of Mass, what are some ways we can prepare to hear God's Word through the readings on Sunday? What have you tried?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the 'Glory Be'.