Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Gospel text (*Mt* 22:34-40): When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a scholar of the law tested him by asking, "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "You shall 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 is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."

"You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart… You shall love your neighbor as yourself"

Fr. Johannes VILAR
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Today, the Church reminds us of our "attitude before life": "The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments" (Mt 22:40). St. Matthew and St. Mark put these words upon Jesus Christ's lips, while St. Luke ascribes them to a Pharisee. Regardless, they always appear in the context of a dialogue. Jesus Christ had probably been asked similar questions several times. Jesus Christ replies with the beginning of the Shema, the prayer formed by two verses from Deuteronomy and one from the Book of Numbers, which fervent Jews had to say at least twice a day: "Hear O Israel! The Eternal, our God…". By reciting it during their daily chores, they become God-conscious, while remembering the most important thing in their lives: To love God, our Lord, above "everything and everyone" and our neighbor as ourselves. Afterwards, when the Last Supper was over, with the example of the washing of the feet, Jesus Christ gave us a "new commandment": to love each other as He loves us, with "divine strength".

We need determination to put into practice this sweet commandment —which, more than a commandment, brings fulfillment and joy— in dealing with others: all people and things, work and leisure, spirit and matter, because they all are God's creatures.

On the other hand, by being infused with God's Love, which overfills all our being, we are able to respond in a “divine manner” to this Love. Merciful God, who not only takes away the sin of the world (cf. Jn 1:29), but who divinizes us and makes us “participants” in the Divine Nature (only Jesus is the Son by Nature); the Holy Spirit bears testimony to our human spirit that we are children of God through the Son. St. Josemaria Escriva liked to speak of “deification”, a word with a certain tradition amongst the Fathers of the Church. For Instance, St. Basil the Great wrote: “Just as when a sunbeam falls on bright and transparent bodies, they themselves become brilliant too, and shed forth a fresh brightness from themselves, so souls wherein the Spirit dwells, illuminated by the Spirit, themselves become spiritual, and send forth their grace to others. Hence comes... heavenly citizenship, a place in the chorus of angels, joy without end, abiding in God, the being made like to God, and, highest of all, the being made God.” Let us truly hope so!

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “There will never be another God, Trypho, and there has been no other since the world began… than he who made and ordered the universe. We do not think that our God is different from yours. He is the same who brought your fathers out of Egypt” (San Justin)
- "Today, more than ever, worship is necessary! Perhaps one of the greatest perversions of our time is that we are encouraged to worship the human while setting aside the divine. 'You shall worship the Lord your God alone' is the great challenge in the face of so many proposals of emptiness and void." (Francis)
- “… The first word contains the first commandment of the Law: "You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve him.... You shall not go after other gods." God's first call and just demand is that man accept him and worship him” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n 2084)