

**Homily for the 30<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time - Cycle A**

**St. Anthony Church  
Effingham, Illinois**

**October 29, 2017**

**†Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki  
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ: since I was coming to Effingham today to celebrate Mass later this morning at Sacred Heart Church for the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sacred Heart Parish, I wanted to celebrate this Mass with you here at St. Anthony Church as an expression of my solidarity with you following the unexpected resignation of your pastor, Father Christopher Brey. I know that his sudden departure is hurtful for you here in Effingham and Shumway, as it is for his fellow priests throughout our diocese and for me personally. As Bishop of this Diocese, I placed a lot of trust in Father Brey as Pastor, Dean, Chairman of the Presbyteral Council, Chairman of the Ministry to Priests Team, and Chairman of the Diocesan Committee for Hispanic Ministry. I am grateful for the good that he did in these roles and in his priestly ministry, but it is still hurtful when trust is betrayed. We need to pray for Father Brey's repentance and forgiveness. I will keep all of you in my prayers for healing

and I assure you that I am working personally with our Priests' Personnel Board Pastor to assign an experienced pastor who will provide for the pastoral care of St. Anthony Parish, Effingham, and Annunciation Parish, Shumway, as well as a new Dean for the Effingham Deanery.

Shifting our focus to the main reason why we are here today, namely, to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we hear our Lord calling us in our scriptural readings to treat others as we would want to be treated because we are all brothers and sisters in Christ and children of our heavenly Father.

The author of the book of Exodus reminds the Jewish people in the first reading that they too were once an alien people living in the land of Egypt. Precisely because of their covenant with the Lord, they must not forget what it is like to be the outsiders. As a matter of fact, by virtue of their relationship with God, they are bound to love the most vulnerable people – foreigners, widows, orphans, and the poor – with the same the love that God shows to them.

This message is equally important for us to hear today, for if we are to be true disciples of our Lord, we must not lose sight of the fact that we are just pilgrims on a journey to our heavenly home. This world in which

we presently live is not our final destination nor our permanent home, so we must be ever cognizant as Christians of our obligation to go above and beyond the norms of how society calls us to treat others, for the Gospel ought to be our sole guiding norm.

Therefore, turning our attention to our Gospel reading for today, it should be evident that there is a very strong parallel to be drawn between the message of the author of the book of Exodus and the message of our Lord. As a matter of fact, Jesus draws on the wisdom of the Old Testament writers in responding to the Pharisees' question of what is the greatest commandment. First, Jesus quotes a passage from the book of Deuteronomy, which states: *you shall love the LORD, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength.*<sup>1</sup> But our Lord does not stop there; rather, He goes on to say that there is a second commandment that is also important which He draws from the book of Leviticus: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*<sup>2</sup> In drawing these two passages from the Old Testament, our Lord presents us with the reality that love of our neighbor is intricately intertwined with our love of God.

This combination of these two passages from Deuteronomy and Leviticus is not found before the time of Jesus. He gives us a new

commandment by linking these two commands together. The uniqueness is in the combination and the declaration that the whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments. All other laws are derived from the love of God.

In the second reading that we heard today, Saint Paul commended the Thessalonians for turning from their idols to serve the living and true God. As we look at our own lives we should not fool ourselves into thinking we have no idols to which we devote our time and attention simply because we do not literally fall down and worship a golden calf. False idols come in many shapes and sizes. An example of one such false idol was mentioned by one of the Confirmation candidates just this past Friday night at Christ the King Parish in Springfield. Prior to each Confirmation Mass, I send a questionnaire to all the candidates asking what receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation means to them and how they plan to live out their Confirmation commitment. In answer to the second question - how do you plan to live out your Confirmation commitment? - one candidate wrote, "I will give more of my attention to God than my phone." We all laugh, but this statement is profoundly true.

As a realistic test of your love for God, ask: do you give more attention to God or to your smart phone, or to something or someone else?

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our Lord is telling us that if we are to be His disciples, our love of God must come first and foremost. He must be the true Lord of our lives. Moreover, we must not only love God, but we must also love our neighbors whom God made in His own image. This is our great commandment. So, may we dedicate ourselves to living by this commandment ever more faithfully in our daily lives, not with a nebulous sentimentality, but with that total commitment in which we express our true devotion to God and service to those around us.

As we prepare to approach the Eucharist, we ask our Lord to nourish us with the sacrament that makes it possible for us to love both God and our neighbor, so that when our earthly pilgrimage is over, we might inherit our eternal dwelling place in Heaven.

May God give us this grace. Amen

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<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 6:5

<sup>2</sup> Leviticus 19:18