

## 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

### Deuteronomy 30:10-14

*This fifth and final book of the law of Moses will conclude with his death in chapter 34. The six preceding chapters, 27-33, which includes today's selection, form his farewell discourse.<sup>2</sup>*

**Moses said to the people:** Moses passionately urges the people to obey the law of God and he calls for a deep and sincere return to the Lord and a renewal of the covenant.<sup>5</sup>

**10**“If only you would heed the voice of the Lord, your God, and keep his commandments and statutes that are written in this book of the law, when you return to the Lord, your God, with all your heart and all your soul. He is speaking here about repentance and it is not enough to have only external, formalistic observances. It is a question of an attitude profoundly rooted in the heart.<sup>4</sup>

**11**For this command that I enjoin on you today is not too mysterious and remote Here he is contrasting the simplicity of knowing what God wants the people to do (as it is written right here in the book of Deuteronomy) with the pagan attempts to discern the will of God such as using soothsayers, oracles and other mysterious means.<sup>5</sup> **for you.** The practice of our faith is as near to us as our hearts and as accessible as our nearest neighbor.<sup>1</sup> It is the long-standing teaching of the Church that God does not command impossible things; when he makes a commandment he is telling us to do what we can and to ask his help as regards what is beyond us and he helps us to fulfill it.<sup>3</sup>

**12**It is not up in the sky, that you should say, ‘Who will go up in the sky to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may carry it out?’

**13**Nor is it across the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will cross the sea to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may carry it out?’ The law of God is not remote and inaccessible but very near. There is no difficulty in discovering the will of God. It has been made quite evident to Israel. All that remains is for them to carry it out. This is a call to renewal of the covenant, a challenge to the people to live out their relationship to God.<sup>5</sup>

**14**No, it is something very near to you, already in your mouths and in your hearts; The author even moves beyond the tablets of stone on which the commandments had been written and suggests that the law is in the people's mouths and hearts.<sup>3</sup> Our lives express what is rooted in our hearts. The heart is used in the Bible where in English we would use mind or will. It is seen as the chief bodily focus of emotional activity. It is the seat of the will as well as intelligence, wisdom, discernment and knowledge. The heart is considered the source of thoughts, desires and deeds and is seen as the source of the character of a person.<sup>2</sup> **you have only to carry it out.”** The commandment to love is already a part of us. We need only to live it out. If a man fails to observe the Commandments, he condemns himself to a segregation from what makes his being especially human.<sup>4</sup>

### Colossians 1:15-20

*This letter was written by Paul probably during his imprisonment in Rome early in the year 63. The church in Colossae was composed mostly of Gentiles although there were some Jews. It was founded by Epaphras, a faithful disciple of Paul's, who went to him and told him that teachings at odds with the Gospel were being promoted by false apostles. These teachings claimed that the universe was ruled by a hierarchy of heavenly powers that had a mighty influence on the affairs of men and the fate of the cosmos. They were trying to fit the mystery of Christ into their scheme of things. This letter was Paul's response.<sup>6</sup> Today's selection is part of an ancient hymn that extols Christ's deity and supremacy over creation.<sup>8</sup> It is interesting to note that the Pontifical Document on New Age that was released in Feb. of 2003 called: “Jesus Christ The Bearer Of The Water Of Life: A Christian Reflection On the ‘New Age’” quotes this passage from St. Paul to answer the deceptions of the New Age movement in today's culture.<sup>7</sup>*

**15Christ Jesus is the image** Jesus has the same divine nature as God but they are two distinct persons as no one is the image of himself.<sup>6</sup> of the invisible God, Christ makes visible the life and love of the invisible God.<sup>8</sup> On his own, through the use of reason, man can figure out that God exists but he cannot, on his own, grasp the essence of God and in this sense God is said to be invisible.<sup>6</sup> the firstborn of all creation. “Firstborn” is the term for an eldest child, with emphasis on his legal right of inheritance. Since Christ is the first and only (natural) Son begotten of the Father, he is the designated heir of the Father’s estate, which is the entire cosmos.<sup>8</sup> This beautiful hymn stresses that Jesus is both God and man. This line shows us Christ’s place in creation for not only does he pre-date all creation, but all other things were created through him and for him.<sup>6</sup> **JESUS EXISTED FOR ALL ETERNITY.<sup>1</sup>**

**16For in him were created all things** Christ’s dominion is over the entire cosmos. **JESUS WAS PRESENT AT THE CREATION OF THE WORLD.<sup>1</sup>** in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; **CHRIST IS THE CENTER OF THE ANGELIC WORLD.<sup>9</sup>** (CCC 331) Following are the nine classes or choirs of angels, listed in ascending order, named according to their traditionally assigned duties: *angels, archangels, principalities, (Said to carry scepters with which they direct God’s commands. With archangels and angels they are the heavenly multitude that is in God’s ordinary and immediate service in what pertains to the visible world. It was said that countries would be assigned to certain principalities.) powers, (Shown with swords, so called because of their special power in restraining the assault of the evil spirit.) virtues, dominations, (They are shown in royal robes and crowned, for their authority; movers of stars and planets.) thrones, (In a kneeling posture of adoration.) cherubim, and seraphim.<sup>10</sup>* The concept of angels who revolted and fell appears in the NT in 2Pt 2:4 and Jude 6, but elsewhere the existence of malicious spirits is taken for granted but not explained.<sup>11</sup> No distinction is made here between blessed angels and demonic spirits, since Paul’s point is that Christ reigns supreme over the entire host of benevolent and malevolent spirits.<sup>8</sup> all things were created through him and for him. Here Paul is clarifying the exalted position of Jesus in answer to those who thought of him as a spiritual intermediary between bodily beings and heavenly beings, which would have made Jesus lower than the angels.<sup>6</sup> **JESUS IS THE PRINCIPLE UPON WHICH HEAVEN AND EARTH EXIST.<sup>1</sup>**

**17He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.** If Christ’s sovereign will were to cease to operate for even an instant, everything would return into the nothingness from which he drew everything that exists. Jesus Christ is God; this is why he has pre-eminence over all created things.<sup>6</sup> **JESUS IS THE RULER OF MATERIAL CREATION.<sup>1</sup>** Nothing exists that does not owe its existence to God the Creator.<sup>9</sup> (CCC 338)

**18He is the head of the body, the church.** In addition to being over all natural creation, Jesus is also over the church. **JESUS IS THE HEAD OF THE MYSTICAL BODY WE CALL THE CHURCH.<sup>1</sup>** He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, Jesus was the first man to rise from the dead, never again to die and thanks to him men are enabled to experience resurrection in glory because they are justified through him.<sup>6</sup> **IN THE RISEN BODY OF JESUS WE HAVE THE REASON FOR OUR HOPE IN EVERLASTING LIFE.<sup>1</sup>** That in all things he himself might be preeminent.

**19For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell,** This refers to his divinity for the very essence of the godhead resides in Jesus Christ and since he possesses the divine nature, he also possesses the fullness of the supernatural gifts.<sup>6</sup> This is one of the clearest assertions of Christ’s deity in the NT.<sup>8</sup>

**20and through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross through him, whether those on earth or those in heaven.** The death of Jesus restores peace between the Father and the human family. This friendship was interrupted by the rebellion of Adam, who

stripped the family of man of its inheritance and caused disorder and corruption to prevail throughout the world. Harmony is now being restored as the grace of the New Covenant permeates and renews the cosmos.<sup>8</sup> By his death on the cross, Jesus has restored peace and reconciled all things to God.

### **Luke 10:25-37**

*This story takes place in Samaria. In today's selection Jesus teaches two things: 1. Love for our neighbor (active service) must accompany our love for God (prayer) and these together are indispensable for living in God's friendship.<sup>15</sup> 2. He also illustrates that holiness as defined by the Old Covenant is now surpassed by the holiness of the New. The quest for holiness in ancient Israel meant that God's people had to separate themselves from everything ungodly, unclean, and impure, including gentiles and sinners. Jesus gives holiness a new focus, defining it as mercy that reaches out to others and no longer divides people into segregated camps or disqualifies some and not others to enter the family of God.<sup>12</sup>*

**25** There was a scholar of the law This was an expert interpreter of the Mosaic Law.<sup>12</sup> who stood up to test him and said, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" In Matthew and Mark the spokesperson inquires about the Greatest Commandment in the Law, but here in Luke which has a Gentile-Christian audience that is not overly concerned about the Law, he asks about eternal life.<sup>14</sup>

**26** Jesus said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read it?"

**27** He said in reply, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, This is taken from the ancient Hebrew prayer, the *Shema*, Deut. 6:4-6 and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." This is from Leviticus 19:18.

**28** He replied to him, "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live." In Matthew 22:37 Jesus gives the very same reply when he is asked which is the principal commandment of the Law and concludes his answer by saying, "On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets." This passage also includes another basic doctrine: the Law of God is not something negative—"Do not do this"—but something completely positive—love. Holiness, to which all baptized people are called, does not consist in not sinning, but in loving, in doing positive things, in bearing fruit in the form of love of God. When Jesus describes for us the Last Judgment he stresses this positive aspect of the Law of God. The reward of eternal life will be given to those who do good.<sup>15</sup>

**29** But because he wished to justify himself, Jesus had made the lawyer's question seem easy.<sup>13</sup> he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" In the Leviticus text, the neighbor is one's fellow Israelite. This question implies that someone is not my neighbor. Jesus' story replies that there is no one who is not my neighbor. "Neighbor" is not a matter of blood bonds or nationality or religious communion; it is determined by the attitude a person has toward others.<sup>13</sup>

**30** Jesus replied, "A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. This 17 mile journey eastward descends nearly 3,200 feet. Its rough terrain made the roadway a target area for bandits and thieves.<sup>12</sup> They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead.

**31** A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. The priest was probably on his way to the temple to practice his sacred duties and he did not even touch the fallen man because, as scripture has it in Numbers 19:11, a priest would be banned from entering into the sacred temple for seven days after touching a dead person. His duty to the temple and community came before helping this particular man.<sup>16</sup> Both the priest and the Levite adhere to Israel's purity laws, which forbade them from touching the corpses of anyone other than family members. They therefore chose to preserve their legal purity and so passed the half dead victim.<sup>12</sup>

**32**Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. The Levite was an assistant to the priests and he was also caught up in his duties to his ministry and his responsibility which was being an assistant to the priest in the temple and other religious duties.<sup>16</sup>

**33**But a Samaritan traveler Samaritans were hated by the lawyer's racial group. They were considered to be heretics for intermarrying with pagans<sup>5</sup> and worshipping on Mt. Gerizim rather than on Mt. Zion.<sup>11</sup> who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. The Samaritan exemplifies this new standard of holiness, where God no longer requires his people to separate from others, but calls them to extend mercy to everyone in need and exclude no one on the grounds of prejudice, dislike, or even legal uncleanness as defined by the Torah. Mercy is the towering rule of Christ's kingdom. In Luke 6:36 Jesus replaces the command to imitate Yahweh's holiness with a command to imitate his mercy.<sup>12</sup>

**34**He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn, and cared for him.

**35**The next day he took out two silver coins This would have been about two days' wages and would have paid for several days of lodging.<sup>12</sup> and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, 'Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.'

**36**Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers' victim?" This story, by showing a Samaritan, a member of the people despised and ridiculed by Jews, performing a loving service avoided by Jewish religious leaders would have been shocking and, for many Jews, unbelievable and unacceptable. The impact in this Gospel is heightened in view of the Samaritan inhospitality of 9:52-53.<sup>13</sup>

**37**He answered, "The one who treated him with mercy." One way to express love for one's neighbor is to perform the "works of mercy". There are fourteen such works, seven spiritual and seven corporal. The spiritual are: to convert the sinner, to instruct the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to comfort the sorrowful, to bear wrongs patiently, to forgive injuries and to pray for the living and the dead. The corporal works are: to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to shelter the homeless, to visit the sick, to visit the imprisoned and to bury the dead.<sup>15</sup> Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God.<sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." St. Augustine identifies the Good Samaritan with our Lord who restored mankind. Adam is the man attacked by Satan and his legions; he is stripped of his immortality and left dead in sin. The priest and the Levite represent the Old Covenant and its inability to restore man to new life. Jesus Christ comes as the Good Samaritan to rescue man from death and brings him to the inn of the Church for refreshment and healing through the sacraments.<sup>12</sup>

*Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2004" by Aelred R. Rossier, (2) "Dictionary of the Bible" by John L. McKenzie, S.J., (3) "The Navarre Bible: Pentateuch," (4) "Saint Joseph Commentary On The Sunday Readings" by Achille DeGeest, O.F.M., (5) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 1998" by Lawrence E. Mick, (6) "The Navarre Bible: Captivity Epistles," (7) "Jesus Christ The Bearer Of The Water Of Life—A Christian Reflection On The 'New Age,'" produced by the Pontifical Council For Culture and For Inter-religious Dialog, (8) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Letters of St. Paul to the Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (9) "Catechism Of The Catholic Church," (10) "Catholic Source Book" Edited by Rev. Peter Klein, (11) "Dictionary of the Bible" by John L. McKenzie, S.J., (12) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of LUKE, With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (13) "The Collegeville Bible Commentary: Luke" by Jerome Kodell, O.S.B., (14) "The Jerome Biblical Commentary", (15) "The Navarre Bible: ST LUKE" and (16) "The Bread of Life Catholic Bible Study" by Deacon Ken & Marie Finn.*

*In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.*