# “Love of God”

At the heart of all our readings, is the ***“Love of God.”*** To love God and our neighbor is nothing less than to be righteous. It is the love of God which has been stamped in our hearts that keep us living according to the commandments of God and it reminds us to put them into practice. It is when we keep His commandments that we love God. It is with the love of God that we interpret the law of God. Love of God and neighbor, is the key to attain heaven. By helping our neighbor who is in trouble, out of love for God that is when we are truly keeping the law of God.

No one who is in love with himself would have room in their heart to love God. If we have self-love we will be incapable of loving God and our neighbor. Anyone who loves themselves seeks their own glory instead of seeking only the glory of God who desires to pour down His divine blessings on us if we love Him back. Anyone who loves God could be easily recognized by the way they constantly strive by His grace to glorify God by fulfilling all His commandments. They rejoice when they are humbled instead of being sad.

In our first reading we heard that Moses enjoined it on his people to fear the Lord. When we love God, we will realize how loving He is and we would detest to offending Him. That is the fear of the Lord that Moses is asking the Israelite to have for God. Moses is telling us that if we have the love of God, we too will rejoice in His glory. Like John the Baptist said, we will desire that we will be less known while the glory of God would increase in others. Anyone who fears God in the depth of their heart, has already being loved by God.

As scripture says, the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. When we have the wisdom that comes from above, we will know how deeply God loves us and we would desire nothing else, except His love. Love of God would lead us to obey all His commandments and ordinances as Moses told the Israelites. He told them that God would reward them abundantly by fulfilling the promise He made to their fathers. The fulfillment of the land full of milk and honey would be their reward.

Moses enjoined them to love God above anything else, even above self-love. He told them to love God with the totality of their hearts, soul, and strength. Anyone who loves God in the depth of their heart has already being loved by God, because God loves us first. The measure of the depth of our love for God depends on how deeply we are aware of God’s love for us. When we love God with all our heart, our soul would be raised up to God in love of Him and we would have a glimpse of how madly God is in love with us.

Our second reading, gives us some of the qualities of the great High Priest Jesus who should be our role model. By His love for us, He procured our redemption, and we have the assurance that Jesus is able to save those who love God and approach God through Him since unlike the Levitical priests who dies and is replaced by another, Jesus, intercedes for us with the Father unceasingly. He is the only High Priest who lives forever and ever. He is the only High Priest that has risen from the dead and lives for eternity.

The qualities listed by the inspired author of the letter to the Hebrews concerning Jesus separates Him from other high priests. He is holy, innocent, undefiled, sinless, and He is above anything that exists. His priesthood is described as so perfect and effective that it only requires a single action of sacrificial offering before God. His everlasting once and for all action of self-sacrifice is recognized as the only perfect sacrifice needed to achieve the reconciliation with God of all sinful humanity from Adam and Eve till the end of time.

As Catholics, we are aware that what we do at Mass is a representation or renewal of Christ sacrifice as priest and victim on Calvary. It is not a duplicate but the same sacrifice. Therefore, same sacrifice is extended to every generation that comes along until the end of time. It is a representation of the same sacrifice made with bread and wine in the upper room at the last supper. It fulfills Prophet Malachi’s prophesy that **“From the rising of the sun to its setting, my name is great among the nations; Incense offerings are made to my name everywhere, and a pure offering; For my name is great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts”** (Malachi 1:11).

In our Gospel reading, Jesus was asked one question to which He gave two answers. However, we should observe carefully from the answer of Jesus that there is only one commandment of love not two. The commandment to love God with our whole being is from the Hebrew Bible in the Book of Deuteronomy and the command to love our neighbor is from the Book of Leviticus. Jesus did not give a new commandment that He did not give through the prophets in the Hebrew Bible. He only combined both to make one.

 The commandment is a realization that all true love is of God. This true love is unlike romantic love however wonderful it may be, romantic love is but an early emotion that must be nurtured and grow into maturity. True love often demands a dying-to-self. It is an act of unselfishness. When we die a physical death, our death is a sign of ultimate act of love because we place ourselves confidently into the hands of God. As Christians, we have the faith that death leads to eternal life of the resurrection. Our message by our belief, is that love in this life and resurrection to eternal life leads to the perfect love of God that is why we strife to die-to-self.

When we die-to-self, by the grace of God, we come to love God and depend on Him totally. Even though we live in this world, we at the same time do not live in it, for although we live in our bodies, we are constantly living in the spirit because of the love that draws us towards God. Once the love of God has broken the chain of self-love, our hearts never stops burning with the flame of divine love that unites us to God by an irresistible longing for His perfect love.

So, by loving God and our neighbor with our whole being, meaning our heart, soul, mind and strength, we will become children of God in His kingdom. What the Scribe was missing, is the love of neighbor that includes all people not just Jews alone.

As we come to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, let us ask Him for His perfect love so our hearts can keep burning for His love.