

23RD SUNDAY – ORD. (A)

LOVE IS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW

September 9/10, 2023

The first three of the Ten Commandments is about the love of God, and the rest about the love of neighbor. This is the summary made by Jesus and echoed by St. Paul in the second reading we just heard. He said: “Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another...Love does no evil to anyone”. Jesus told His disciples: “No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends” (Jn.15:13).

Love, therefore, makes one a watchman over his friends. This is what Ezekiel was told. As a prophet, he was chosen to be responsible for the welfare of the Israelites. His prophetic mission was like a watchman keeping watch over a property so that no one can tamper with it. He was to take care of the spiritual lives of the Israelites. He was under compulsion to undertake his task and failure to do so would attract punishment.

Jesus also explains how we should show love. It is reconciling with a brother who has offended you. You should make the necessary effort to reconcile with him. It is you who have been offended or sinned against who should apply all means to win your brother back. He reminded His disciples that where two or three are gathered in His name, He will be there among them.

If there is no love, there is no reconciliation, and if there is no reconciliation, there is no unity, and if there is no unity, there can be no meeting together to pray. So, in order for us to get what we ask for, there is the need for us to live in peace and unity.

As a watchman makes sure that the house or the property, he is watching over is safe, so also every Christian is responsible for the other Christian’s salvation. This means that I have a part to play in your salvation, and you have a part to play in my salvation. Do you know that we are each other’s keepers? God cares for all of us, and He expects each one of us to care about the welfare of each other.

Brotherly correction is a responsibility for every Christian. There is a blessing in bringing people back to the Lord or helping others to change from the wrong way to a good way of life. St. James told the early believers: “My brothers, if one of you strays away from the truth, and another brings him

back to it, he may be sure that anyone who can bring back a sinner from his erring ways will be saving his soul from death and a covering over many a sin" (Jam.5:19-20). God is not ready to destroy any wicked person, so He has called us all to play a watchman's role of guiding the spiritual life of each and everyone. When I keep quiet over your evil deeds, I am equally guilty. I share in your sin.

If our worship today and every day is going to be grace-filled, then we have to reconcile with one another and show love. If we harbor petty grudges in our hearts and fail to do something about it, our prayer may not be effective. If I don't want to forgive, how can God forgive me? "How wonderful it is, how pleasant, for God's people to live together in harmony!" (Ps.33:1).

It is difficult now to approach people to talk about wrong-doing, or to talk about sin. There is the fear that it will be considered judgmental or bigotry. So, how do we differentiate between being judgmental, or friendly in brotherly correction? We are also prevented from helping others because of our own way of life and shortcomings. We have a big log in our eyes, so we have to remove that first before taking the splinter from our brother's eyes; (Mt.7:1-5). All the same, we all have our weaknesses, so we have to correct one another with love.

We hear about love everywhere you turn, but there is no love shown even among Christians that is why there is a lot of problems in the world. We Christians have failed in our roles as watchmen for the world. We are afraid to speak out, and we are not ready to listen to corrections. If you help me to know my mistakes and I change, that is a sign of love. It is not only giving things to people that means you love but also helping them to do what is right and just before the Lord.