

## XXX ORDINARY TIME– 25th October 2020

YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD.....AND YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF.

Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM

### Matthew 22,34-40

*But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*

This Sunday's Gospel presents the latest attack by the spiritual leaders of the people, the Pharisees, against Jesus. Jesus in the temple denounced these leaders of the people as thieves and murderers, thieves because they took over the people who belonged to God, and murderers because they did it with violence .

Then a whole series of attacks are unleashed against Jesus aimed at discrediting him in front of the crowd. But in reality with every attack it is Jesus who comes out the winner and the crowd becomes more and more enthusiastic towards him.

Let's see what Matthew says in chapter 22, 34-40 .When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, the result of the attack by the Sadducees who wanted to ridicule Jesus by dealing with the resurrection seeing the crowds were struck by his teaching. So the more they try to discredit Jesus, the more the people are enthusiastic

*"They gathered together..."* here the evangelist quotes Psalm 2 ,2, where we read *"The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed,..."* The kings of the earth want to keep dominion over the people and are against the Lord, who instead wants to free them.

*"And one of them, a lawyer..."* this time the Pharisees, seeing how it had not gone well the time they presented the tribute of Caesar to Jesus, this time they use an expert, a doctor of the Law, an important personage, one of those whose word had the same value as the word of God. *"..asked him a question to test him."* The translation says *"..to test him."* But the verb used was 'to tempt' ‘

This verb appears for the first time in chapter 4, for the temptations of the devil in the desert, and then it will always be used to define the actions of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The spiritual leaders of the people, those who claimed to be closest to God, are actually instruments of the devil. Why? While the God of Jesus is love that puts himself at service, theirs is a power that wants to dominate and whoever stands beside power is an instrument of the devil.

Well the temptation is this: *"Teacher,.."* For the third time they turn to Jesus with this title, always in the mouth of his enemies, or people who are hostile to him. *".. which is the great commandment*

*in the Law?*” Beware that the question is not addressed to learn, but to condemn. They know what the great commandment is, the most important one: the observance of the Sabbath, because it is the only commandment that even God observes.

God and the angels in heaven on the Sabbath do not perform any activity. Observance of this one commandment corresponded to the observance of the whole Law, so the transgression of this one commandment was equivalent to the transgression of the whole Law and for this reason there is the death penalty.

But why do they ask Jesus this question? Because Jesus has a casual attitude towards the commandments. He ignores the Sabbath and continues to do his activities in favour of mankind, and even when the rich man asked him which commandments to observe in order to obtain eternal life, Jesus, in the list he made, omitted the three most important, those that were exclusive to Israel, the first three commandments and indicated to him those that were the patrimony of the universal culture "do not kill" "do not steal" "do not commit adultery".

So the question is aimed at denouncing Jesus. Jesus once again displaces his interlocutor, they asked him what is the most important commandment, in the answer Jesus does not quote any commandment, but takes a sentence with which the Creed of Israel began, ' "*Hear, O Israel*", taken from the book of Deuteronomy 6,4 - 5, which is this: "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*"

Deuteronomy had in third place "*with all your strength*" which indicated the goods of the person, but Jesus replaces strength with "*..with all your mind.*" Why does Jesus omit strength? Because Jesus' God is not a God who absorbs the strength of men, but is a God who offers and communicates his. The Jesus' God does not ask, he is a God who gives.

And Jesus states: "*This is the great and first commandment.*" But this wasn't a commandment. Jesus raises the love for God to the rank of commandment. But immediately after Jesus adds: "*And a second is like it:...*" and here a quote from the book of Leviticus "*You shall love your neighbour as yourself.*" For Jesus, the love for God is not real if it does not translate into love of your neighbour.

And, Jesus then concludes "*On these two commandments...*" I repeat they are not commandments but Jesus raises the love for God which is then manifested in love of ones neighbour to the level of the most important commandments, " *....depend all the Law and the Prophets.*"

Law and the Prophets is an expression which indicates the Bible, what we call the Old Testament, precisely composed of the Law and the Prophets. So a question aimed at discrediting Jesus, once again he emerges as the winner, proclaiming a new reality with God, no longer based on the observance of the commandments, but on the acceptance and practice of his love.