

Spiritual Readings for the month of November 2022

Please choose a reading and questions for reflection.

The Great Commandment (Matt. 22:34-40, NRSV)

(22:34) When the Pharisees heard that he [Jesus] had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, (35) and one of them, an expert in the law, asked him a question to test him. (36) “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” (37) 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.’ (38) This is the greatest and first commandment. (39) And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ (40) On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

St. Vincent de Paul paraphrases Jesus’ words in his own instruction to Sister Anne Hardemont, in 1658: “O Sister! How happy will you not be at the hour of death because you have dedicated your whole life for the same reason that Jesus Christ dedicated His, -for Charity, for God, and for the poor. If you only knew your good fortune, Sister, you would, in truth, be overwhelmed with joy because, by acting as you do, you are fulfilling the law and the prophets, who command us to love God with our whole heart, and our neighbour as ourselves. And what greater act of love can one perform than to give oneself wholly and entirely, both in one’s state of life and one’s duties, for the salvation and consolation of the afflicted! In that consists our whole perfection.”¹

Reflection

We are probably accustomed to hearing the Great Commandment, though it might help to reflect on the relationship between its first injunction (to love God) and its second injunction (to love one’s neighbour). How in your view, do these injunctions connect to or inform one another?

Prayer

Lord, in our love for You may we always situate love of our neighbour; and in our neighbour may we see You, the One in whom, Scripture and liturgy alike remind us, *we live and move and have our being.*

Submitted by Vincentian Alex Damm, St. Jerome’s Conference

¹ Letter 2734, in Letters of St. Vincent de Paul, Translated and edited by Joseph Leonard, with an introduction by Henri Bremond (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1937), p. 484.

Loving Attentiveness

“For I was hungry and you gave me food to eat, I was thirsty and you gave drink.”
(Matthew 25:35)

Pope Francis in “The Joy of the Gospel” declares that what the Holy Spirit mobilizes is an attentiveness which considers the other “in certain sense as one with ourselves.” This he regards as loving attentiveness which is “the beginning of a true concern for their person which inspires me effectively to seek their good”. Such entails appreciating those experiencing poverty, in their goodness, in their experience, and in their ways of living the faith.

The Pope, too, in his homily for the opening of the Synod on October 10, 2021 asserts that true encounter arises only from listening – one with the heart. He, therefore, asks that we listen with the heart; only then people feel they are being heard, not judged, and feel free to recount their experiences and their spiritual journey. Finally, he exhorts us “not to soundproof our hearts” and “not to remain barricaded in our certainties”.

Reflection

Have you at times been inattentive or indifferent to our Neighbour’s needs before, during or after a home visit - our core service? Do you always “listen with your heart”? What role does this listening with discernment play in your life? Has listening with your heart led you to a deeper awareness and understanding of the needs of those we serve?

What are you willing to do for those who are most in need?

Describe a time when you came in contact with a Neighbour-in-Need who does not share your faith.

Submitted by Vincentian Jose Torres from St. John of the Cross