

# Homily for the 30<sup>TH</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 28-29, 2017

Readings: Exodus 22:20-26; 1 Thessalonians 1:5C-10; Matthew 22:34-40

Preacher: Patrick Fox

All three readings for today offer an opportunity for critical contemporary reflection. We hear of how we ought to treat aliens. We hear that *the word* has been brought to all places. And finally we hear Jesus echoing the Hebrew Scriptures by reaffirming that we should love God with heart, soul and mind and love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

Possibly the most critical part of today's readings come in the call to love our neighbor as we would be loved. As we try to address all the issues with immigration today, we hear heated voices on various sides. Through all of that there seems to be more talking over one another, doing our best not to listen and failing to put any energy into finding common ground. And how are we loving ourselves and others?

We are all called to be stewards of the Word of God—a call that is rooted in the great commandment. As a people who are hardly all indigenous we should be acutely aware of the message of the book of Exodus and we can try to see ourselves, right here, right now, in the letter to the people of Thessalonica.

We are those others who have come to know the Word of God. We are the stranger, whether as immigrants or progeny of immigrants, and as we meet new immigrants. All of us, regardless of our faith traditions, share this land and all of us are called to love God and our neighbor.

I would like share a story that I hope might offer us a model for action.

A long time ago in a distant place two strangers met near the borders of their respective countries. They were cautious on first meeting but gradually they opened to one another and over some time they became friends, not quite understanding all that the other claimed dear but each heard the great command.

Time passed and they had not been in contact with one another. One was eventually convicted of a serious crime; the punishment was death. On the eve of the planned execution, the other came to that place and seeing the friend, went to the ruler and asked that the friend be allowed to spend time with family so they could put their affairs in order. The ruler was skeptical but when the friend agreed to take the other's place, the ruler said yes. Three days were granted and the other remained in jail, waiting for the return of the one who was sentenced.

Time passed and the one who was originally sentenced had not returned. The friend who stood in his place was taken to the place of hanging. As the order was about to be carried out, the other returned and assumed a place on the gallows. The ruler was so moved that he granted a pardon—on the one condition that both of them would welcome the ruler as a friend as well.

There is, for me, much to ponder in that story. I let the prophetic words of Exodus, Paul to the Thessalonians, and the Gospel of Matthew resonate within that story and within my day-to-day journey. I invite you to join me in listening to and welcoming the stranger and in trying to live the rule of the great commandments with all who cross our paths.