

THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME OCTOBER 29, 2023.

In today's Gospel reading from Matthew, we hear Jesus, when asked which commandment is the greatest, answers by articulating **TWO commandments**: love of **God** and love of **neighbor**. There really is no difference between the two...love of God is love of neighbor. **They are not separate things**. And there is no way to **do the one without doing the other**.

Many of us wish that were not the case. Sometimes we **delude ourselves** into believing that love of God and love of neighbor are somehow **separate**, that we can somehow be "loving" God even when we **are not treating our brothers and sisters very well**. And for those of us (you and me) who belong to particular faith traditions, this sometimes manifests itself in what I call "**hiding in religion**." When people fall into the trap of "hiding in religion" they essentially fool themselves into breaking apart these two commandments, convincing themselves that loving God simply involves being **faithful to certain religious practices**, or giving their assent to particular faith statements, or maybe even by simply **being at Mass** or some kind of worship service Sunday after Sunday.

If we truly want to know whether or not we love God (with whole heart, soul, mind, etc....), we **should not** be looking at what happens **within these walls on Sunday**. Nor should we waste time counting the "extra" things we do, the rosaries we say, or the number of spiritual books we have read. No. if we really want to know if we do indeed love God, we simply need to **look at our lives**, our day -to-day ordinary lives, determining if we truly treat ourselves as **if we are the least** and if we treat others as **if they are the greatest**. That is the only measure that matters. However, to want the one (to love God), but not be willing to do the other (love neighbor), indicates that our faith is somewhat **diminished**, and in extreme cases, **dead**.

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