

Thirty First Sunday Ordinary Time (B). SHEMA

Tuesday November 5th is voting day in the United States and those who **can vote** are encouraged to practice their civic duty. It is called a duty because although you might have the right to vote, every right comes with a duty and in the case of voting, the duty is to exercise that right. We as Catholics are called to vote and to vote based on our conscience, our duty is to form our conscience so that our vote is always **geared towards the salvation of souls and the greater good**. If I was to describe a feeling for these elections that seem to be common amongst our families, communities and country, is **fear**. I sense that many are fearful of the uncertainty, what is going to happen if the person I vote for loses or wins... what will happen to my family, community, the economy, my faith... because of the uncertainty we start asking the what if questions... what if I... this uncertainty, this fear can paralyze us, which prevents us from **taking action**. **I think that the Holy Spirit is guiding us through the readings to take action.**

The people of Israel had many leaders, some political, some spiritual, sometimes they were the same but mostly they were different. The office of the priesthood was established with the purpose of making offerings and sacrifices on behalf of the people. The priest was the spiritual leader who connected people's offerings/**actions** as sacrifice to God for their sins. The letter to the Hebrews tells us that the Levitical priests were in office until death, that there were many because the office of the priesthood needed to be always filled. The priest was the only one able to offer sacrifice on behalf of people's sin. Last few weeks we have been hearing about Jesus as the high priest and today we heard that as the high priest his office was not until death but **perpetual or eternal, it doesn't pass away**. Jesus changed the office of the priesthood forever, as the high priest he offered himself as the perfect sacrifice that would only need to be done once and for all. It is interesting to me that with this sacrifice he didn't eliminate the priest, he elevated the priest to participate in his perfect sacrifice. Aside from the ministerial priesthood, you and I are also called to the priesthood, upon baptism we are baptized, priest, prophets and kings. Our baptismal priesthood, similarly, to voting comes with rights and duties. He gives us the right to be co-participants with Christ and we have the duty to offer sacrifice. **What sacrifice can I offer? Didn't Jesus make the perfect sacrifice?** The perfect sacrifice that Jesus offered was the sacrifice of Love, he loved us so much that he gave his life for us, but he wants us to participate in his love. **How can I participate? By loving him back...**

In the gospel of John, our Lord tells us that if we love him, we are to keep his commandments. In today's gospel a scribe asks Jesus, which is the first or most important of the commandments and our Lord recites the **Shema** from the Old Testament. The Shema is a prayer that our Jewish brothers and sisters recite daily. It is called the Shema because it describes the first word in the prayer... Shema means hear

or listen... The prayer states **“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”** He also added the second commandment, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. Not that they are two different, but they are one Commandment... to Love... If you love God you will love your neighbor... if you love your neighbor you are loving God...**What does the Shema mean?**

Hear, O Israel is a calling to not only hear but to listen, to pay attention and the way that it is known that you heard, or listen is by the action that you take, how do you respond to what you are hearing.

The Lord our God is the one Lord, God is the only God, there are no other, avoid idolatry. Is he the first in your life?

Love the Lord your God, to Love God is not a simple feeling or sentiment, is to keep his commandments, is to listen and respond by showing God’s love to others.

With all your heart, the heart was thought of as the center of all parts of human existence, you thought with your heart, you felt with your heart, you made sense of the world with your heart, your heart was your whole feelings and mind.

With all your soul, the soul was not viewed as just the innermost spirit, the soul was seen as the entire human being both body and spirit. To love with all your soul was to devote your entire being, capabilities and limitations to love God and neighbor.

With all your might, to love with all your might was viewed as not just with all your strength but was seen as to love to the maximum, every moment, every opportunity, every cell, to love to the limit.

“Hear, O Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception: The Lord our God is one Lord;^{lal 5} and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

The Shema is telling us, to give our entire being, body, spirit, capabilities, limitations, will, affections, happiness, sorrows, our **fears and uncertainty**, to give him everything to the maximum and that we show this by loving our neighbor. Our neighbor is not just the person across in the pew, but across the world, from any race, any political affiliation, any financial status, any religious belief.

This election day, vote for the ultimate high priest, vote for Christ. A vote for Christ is a vote for love, love God and love neighbor. Form your conscious, vote your conscious and fear not, God will do the rest. You are only called to participate in his love and you can participate by **taking action**... If you say you Love God then you have to love Neighbor... 1 letter to John reminds us... If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his

brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen,
cannot love God whom he has not seen.