

## Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost 1 October 2017

*“I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, exhort you to walk in the manner worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all humility and meekness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,...” Eph. 4:1-2*

In today’s readings, the Church teaches us that the vocation of the Christian is to love God and one another. It is the most exalted of vocations because it leads to union with God here on earth and the guarantee of our eternal union with God in heaven. Dom Gueranger in his *The Liturgical Year Vol. 11* sums up in the Epistle (Ephesians 4:1-6) St. Paul’s teaching on the Church “...the dignity of her children. She beseeches them to correspond, in a becoming manner, to their high vocation. This vocation, this call, which God gives us is, as we have been so often told, the call, or invitation, made to the human family to come to the sacred nuptials of divine union; it is the vocation given to us to reign in heaven with the Word, who has made Himself our Spouse, and our Head (cf. Eph. 2:5).” Gueranger, p. 374 *“I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, exhort you to walk in the manner worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all humility and meekness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,...” Eph. 4:1-2* In today’s Gospel (Mt. 22: 34-46) Jesus is tested by the Pharisees about “*which is the great commandment in the Law*” (Mt. 22:36). He eludes their trap and repeats the Old Testament teaching on the need to love God and one’s neighbour: “*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind.*” (Deut. 6:5) *This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like it, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’ (Lev. 19:18) On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.*” Mt. 22: 37-40 The “love” of which Jesus speaks is what St. Paul describes as the practice of “*humility, meekness and patience.*”

### The Glorious Bond of Charity

Dom Gueranger tells us “what we must do to prove ourselves *worthy* of the high honour offered to us by the Son of God. We must practise, among other virtues, these three—*humility, mildness, and patience.* These are the means for gaining the end that is so generously proposed to us. And what is that end? It is the unity of that immense body, which the Son of

God makes His, by the mystic nuptials He vouchsafes to celebrate with our human nature. This Man-God asks one condition from those whom He *calls*, whom He *invites*, to become, through the Church, His bride, bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh (cf. Eph. 5:30). This one condition is, that they maintain such harmony among them that it will make one body and one spirit of them all, the bond of peace. ‘Bond most glorious!’ cries out St. John Chrysostom---‘bond most admirable, which unites us all with one another, and then, thus united, unites us with God.’ (Ep. Ad Eph., Hom. IX, 8) The strength of this bond is the strength of the holy Spirit Himself, who is all holiness and love; for it is that holy Spirit who forms these spiritual and divine ties; He it is who, with the countless multitudes of the baptized, does the work which the soul does in the human body—that is, gives it life, and unites all the members into oneness of person. It is by the Holy Ghost that young and old, poor and rich, men and women, distinct as all these are in other respects, are made one, fused, so to say, in the fire which eternally burns in the Blessed Trinity. But in order that the flame of infinite love may thus draw into its embrace our regenerated humanity, we must get rid of selfish rivalries, and grudges, and dissensions, which, so long as they exist among us, prove us to be carnal (cf. I Cor. 3:3), and, therefore, to be unfit material either for the divine flame to touch, or for the union which that flame produces.” Gueranger, p. 374-5

### The Great Commandment

In today’s Gospel (Mt. 22:34-46), we see how the Pharisees fail in their attempt to trick Jesus into denying the greatest commandment of the law. “...they (the Pharisees) wanted to see if Jesus, who had declared Himself to be God, would not, consequently, make some addition to the commandment of divine love; and if He did they would be justified in condemning Him as having tried to change the letter of the law in its greatest commandment (St. Chrysostom, Hom. 77 in *Matt.*). Our Lord disappointed them. He met their question by giving it a longer answer than they had asked for. Having first recited the text of the *great commandment* as given in the Scriptures, he continued the quotation, and, by so doing, showed them that He was not ignorant of the intention which had induced them to question Him. He reminded them of the second

commandment, like unto the first, the commandment of love of our neighbour, which condemned their intended crime of deicide (crucifixion of Jesus). Thus were they convicted of loving neither their neighbour, nor God Himself, for the first commandment cannot be observed if the second, which flows from and completes it, be broken.” Gueranger, p. 380-1

### Denial of Jesus’ Divinity

Jesus not only shows how the Pharisees lack love of God and neighbour, but they also lack faith as they refuse to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Dom Gueranger shows how Jesus proves that they are blinded in their hatred of Him: “He (Jesus) put a question, in His turn, to them, and they answer it by saying, as they were obliged to do, that *the Christ* was to be of the family of David; but if he be his Son, how comes it that David calls Him his Lord, just as he calls God Himself, as we have it in Psalm 109 (Ps. 109:1: *‘The Lord said to my Lord: Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thy enemies thy footstool.’*), where he celebrates the glories of the Messiah? The only possible explanation is, that the Messiah, who in due time, and as Man, was to be born of David’s house, was God, and Son of God, even before time existed, according to the same psalm: *‘From my womb, before the day-star, I begot thee.’* Ps. 109:3 This answer would have condemned the Pharisees, so they refused to give it; but their silence was an avowal; and, before very long, the eternal Father’s vengeance (The Fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD) upon these vile enemies of His Son will fulfil the prophecy of making them His footstool in blood and shame: that time is to be the terrible day when the justice of God will fall upon the deicide city.” Gueranger, p. 381-2

### Love of God Fulfils the Law

Unlike the Jews who rejected Christ and the law, the Christians, by loving Jesus, fulfil the whole law. Dom Gueranger contrasts the love of the Christians with the rejection of the Pharisees: “The Jews by rejecting Christ Jesus, sinned against both of the commandments which constitute charity, and embody *the whole law*; and we, on the contrary, by loving that same Jesus, *fulfil the whole law*. Jesus is the brightness of eternal glory (cf. Heb. 1:3) one, by nature, with the Father and the Holy Ghost; He is the God whom the *first commandment* bids us love, and it is in Him also that the *second* has its truest and adequate application....Nothing counts with God,

excepting so far as it has reference to Jesus. As St. Augustine says (*in Joan.* Trace cx). God loves men only inasmuch as they either are, or may one day become members of His Son; it is His Son that He loves in them; thus He loves, with one same love though not equally, His Word, and the Flesh of His Word, and the members of His Incarnate Word. Now, charity is love—love such as it is in God, communicated to us creatures by the Holy Ghost. Therefore, what we should love, by charity, both in ourselves, and in others, is the divine Word, either as being, or, according to another expression of the same St. Augustine, ‘that He may be’ in others and in ourselves.’(Serm. cclv., in *dieb pasch.*) ....The question is St. Augustine’s again (Epist. lxi). ‘Who can love Christ without loving, with Him, the Church, which is His body? Without loving all His members? What we do—be it to the least, or be it to the worthiest, be it of evil, or of good—it is to Him we do it, for He tells us so (cf. Mt. 25: 40-45). Then let us love our neighbour as ourselves, because of Christ, who is in each of us, and who gives to us all union and increase of charity.’” (cf. Eph. 4:15, 16) Gueranger, p.382-3

“