

**HOMILY ~ 31st SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
OCTOBER 30/31, 2021**

*When somebody loves you,
it's no good unless they love you,
all the way.
Through the good and lean years,
and all the in between years
come what may.
Who knows where the road may lead us,
only a fool would say.
So if I'm going to love you,
it's for sure I'm going to love you,
all the way,
all the way.*

I think God wants us to love all the way. What do you think? In the First Reading, we hear: “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.” That is clear to me. Moses told this to the people because they were about to enter the Promised Land, and he was afraid that they would adopt the notion that they were self sufficient, that they no longer needed God. That happens when things are going well. We think that we have it all under control. When I think back to what my life was like before COVID, it did feel like I was in the Promised Land. While I know there were people going through a difficult time two years ago, I think many of us look back and long for those days. And maybe we forgot that we need God in the good times and in the bad times. Maybe we forgot that we need to love God all the way. Maybe we are stuck in the self sufficient mode. Maybe we need to spend more time in prayer and coming together to worship the Lord.

In the Gospel Reading, the scribes asked Jesus: “Which is the first of all the commandments?” This is the only time the scribes asked Jesus a legitimate question. They were not trying to trick him or trap him. And this is the only time that everyone was in agreement with his answer. Jesus repeated what we heard in the First Reading, and he added a second commandment: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” These are the two legs of love. We cannot walk on one leg. We need both.

I am worried that much of the isolation caused by COVID will continue. We need to be present to one another, to be aware of their needs so we can love and serve one another. We must be together physically to love. We cannot love remotely. Many companies are going to continue the working from home. I have talked

to a number of people who, given the option, they will work from home. They do not have a commute and do not have to get dressed up in the morning; but what about all of the relationships we developed in the past at work? How many times did you have informal discussions at someone's desk, run into someone in the break room or have lunch? Did you go out to lunch with a colleague, and were able to help each other with work or personal problems? If the only contact you have with people is by Zoom or phone, you will never develop these relationships. All of these missed opportunities. When I was a student, I remember all of the informal contacts I had with other students, the study groups, the in-class discussions; and all of those relationships I developed really enhanced my education. We do not get this on-line. And streaming the Mass, it is better than nothing, but it is definitely not the same. We cannot receive the Eucharist from home. Think of all the times in the past you came to Mass and were comforted by just being around a faith-filled community. How many interactions did you have with other people in the gathering space or in coffee and donuts or in the parking lot where you were able to help each other? How many times have we been able to help each other just by listening to one another? I know myself that I have many fewer conversations with people on the weekend than I had in the past. I know there are a lot of people that will discuss things with me if they see me after Mass but would never make an appointment to meet with me. I wonder how many lost opportunities there have been. We will continue to stream the Mass for now because I know there are still people who feel it is not safe for them to attend Mass in person for whatever reason, no judgment. But if you are staying home and streaming because it seems more convenient, or if you have just stopped streaming all together because you are tired of being on-line, come back to Mass. Many people have told me that they did not realize how much they missed St. Edith until they came back.

Are you ready to love all the way? We need both legs of love. We cannot walk on one leg. We need to love and worship the Lord. He is our rock, our security and our hope. We also have to love and serve one another, and the only way we can do this is to be physically present to one another. One of the primary ways we love one another is just being present physically with one another. That is how we love all the way.

Love & Peace,
Fr. Jim