

Year A 30th Sunday Ordinary Time
Ex 22:20-26; Ps 18:2-3, 3-4, 47, 51; 1 Thes 1:5c-10; Mt 22:34-40

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Israel, like many ancient peoples, has laws to especially protect the weak. The typical categories were the widow, the orphan and the alien. The widow was a woman alone, helpless, as was the orphan, who was young. The alien had little or no family, no nearby clan to defend him. Israel is given a reason why they should have no difficulty putting themselves in the alien's place: they themselves had once been aliens, oppressed in Egypt, a foreign land they had gone to to escape dying of hunger during a famine (Gn 41:53-42:7 etc.). Israel's Scriptures, which we have adopted, stress the importance of remembering, reflecting, knowing history. This seems to be lost on much of the public today. They have forgotten the little history they might have learned. Everyone in the US, even the Native Americans, came from some other place. Some actually came after being sold in slavery like Joseph by his brothers. Would that, like Joseph, we could call our fellow human beings "brothers" (Gn 45:4) in a spirit of forgiveness, reconciliation and national unity (the story of Joseph is just that!).

Jesus in the Gospel sets forth the two great commandments, love of God and of neighbor, which are inseparable. 1 Jn 4:20 denies that one can love God, whom he cannot see, if he doesn't love his neighbor whom he can see, and paraphrases Jesus' "new commandment": whoever loves God must also love his neighbor, v. 21. Jas 2:14-17 calls a "faith" that gives mere lip-service to the poor ("have a good day") dead; such a "faith" without works is useless, like the faith of the devils (Jas 2:19).

The Carmelite mystic St. Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi, in the work *Probatione*, part II, says that "Divine love and love of neighbor kiss themselves, and at times together make a beautiful dance before the throne of the Most Holy Trinity." And St. Catherine of Siena often says that we live out our love for God by loving our neighbor. So that when we feel "warm and fuzzy" in our prayer or other such relationship with God, we should keep in mind that this is little more than self-complacency unless we are striving to make our neighbor, and especially the poorest among them, "warm and fuzzy, too."