30th Sunday of Ordinary Time
October 25, 2026

"You shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Jesus names these as the two greatest commandments. The whole law and the prophets, Jesus says, depend on these two commandments. These commandments tell us to live passionately, totally in love. The biblical scholar John J. Pilch explains that "to love God with all one's heart is to be totally attached to God." We belong to God. Our Orthodox Jewish brothers and sisters remind themselves of the primacy of being attached to God in love by wearing these words on their forehead and hanging them on their doorpost.

In Jesus' Mediterranean world, to love neighbor as self is to be totally attached to the people in one's neighborhood or tribe and to love them as one loves their family. But, in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus expands the meaning of belonging to one's neighbor to include all. Love your neighbor without exception. Mother Theresa said, "If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other."

"Treat others as you would like to be treated." The Golden Rule breaks open loving our neighbor as yourself. What you want for yourselves, give that respect to others. The reading from Exodus gives us specific ways of living that respect. Welcome the alien, the refugee, the immigrant, the stranger. Our country's cruel treatment of these contradicts God's intent for the world. We have been created as family. We belong to one another. Exodus specifies, "do not molest or oppress." ICE incarceration, deportation does both.

The Exodus reading tells us to care for the poor, for we are to be like God who is compassionate.

The Exodus reading also reminds us of God's love for widows and orphans. From a young age I saw this lived out in my family. When I was 7 years old two of my uncles died at 39 years of age leaving my aunts as widows, each with 4 young children. My Dad took literally God's call to care for the widows and orphans and supported his sisters and their children in whatever ways he could. My mom did as well. I learned that caring and internalized that these scripture passages were meant to be taken literally.

Live this: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

- Madonna Kuciejczyk-Kernan