

## THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

October 23, 2005

Exodus 22: 20-26 Psalm 18:2-4, 47, 51 1 Thess. 1:5c-10 Matt. 22:34-40

Reflection by S. Noreen Coleman, O.P.

What an exhausting day it must have been for Jesus as presented by Matthew in his 22<sup>nd</sup> chapter. First the self-righteous Pharisees, then the narrow-minded Sadducees, try to trip him up with exasperating questions. Neither succeeding, the Pharisees make another attempt with the question we hear in today's proclamation of the Good News. Addressing Jesus as Teacher, they ask, "...which is the greatest commandment in the Law"?

Expecting to force Jesus to pinpoint one or other of the "shalt nots," these observers of the letter of the law are in for a surprise. Jesus sums up the whole Mosaic law, full of don'ts, into one do, which is, LOVE God, yourself and all others, including enemies. He explains that this three-fold commandment is really nothing new. It has always been considered the basis for the laws inscribed on Moses' tablets of stone and the teaching of the prophets throughout the ages. Obviously, the Pharisees, so well-versed in the Scriptures, have missed the point.

How well do I comprehend and put into practice Jesus' mandate to simply love? I probably exasperate him daily with all my excuses for not stepping out of my comfort zone and putting my faith into loving action. So often I have reflected on Isaiah's challenging message:

*Remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free. Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor. Give clothes to those who have nothing to wear... (58:6-7)*

And, of course I know by heart that same prophet's words that Jesus applied to himself, and to me as his follower:

*God has chosen me and sent me to bring good news to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to announce release to captives and freedom to those in prison...to comfort all who mourn... (61:1-3) (Luke 4:18-19)*

If I look closely at the ten commandments and then reflect carefully on Jesus' spirit of love in action, I can turn a number of those don'ts into do's. Don't kill becomes revere and safeguard all life-forms; don't bear false witness becomes deal truthfully and justly with all people; don't covet becomes respect and be an advocate for the rights of all, and so on.

How I can meet the challenge of both Isaiah and Jesus is to be more aware of the injustices all around me, more educated on these issues and more willing to believe that God has chosen and sent me to bring "good news to the poor."