

Homily for 31 Sunday

The art of listening is an important attribute in the Spirit life! In today's first reading, Moses summons the Chosen People to hear and to listen. Yet, he recognizes how difficult that is. The Israelites were expected to cultivate that listening disposition as individuals and as community. The passage of note from Deuteronomy begins, "Hear, O Israel". In Hebrew, the word is "**Shema**". It is a word that means emphatically, "to listen". Jesus repeats this passage from Deuteronomy when asked, what is the first of all the commandments? The Latin for the word "listen" is "**Oboedire**", it is where we get the word obedience. It is a word that means emphatically, "to listen". And this is a countercultural and controversial message. Being able to hear at the deeper, God's level, one had to be humble and fearlessly open to the holy, silent Mystery of God. To hear God also entails one's willingness to listen to the signs of the times, to the cries of the poor and to the groans of God's creation that is suffering under the heavy boot of hyper consumerism.

In our society, at our best, we like to place our relationship with God on equal footing with the other concerns in our life. When we need God, we spend time with God. When we don't need God, we shelve God. This can be likened to our ipads, tablets and smartphones. We carry God as one application among many applications to open and shut at will. This cannot be farther from the mindset of both Moses and Jesus. For them, it is Shema O Israel, Oboedire people of God, the Lord your God is Lord alone. This is to say, God is not to be one concern among many concerns. Rather, God is to be our ultimate concern. God isn't to be treated like one application among many on our spiritual ipad called the soul. God is to be understood as the operating system itself by which the applications draw their existence and meaning. Both Moses and Jesus are very explicit about what it means to love God as our ultimate concern.

Let's begin with loving God with all our heart. The heart can be understood as the sum of all our emotions and passions. We can ask ourselves, what would it mean for me to love God with how I express my emotions and passions? Let's turn to loving God with all our soul. The soul can be understood as the essence of who I am. We can ask ourselves, what would it mean for me to love God with the totality of all I am? Let's turn to loving God with all your mind. The mind can be understood as the sum of our intellectual powers. We can ask ourselves, what would it mean for me to love God in my intellectual life? And finally, we can turn to loving God with all our strength. Our strength can be understood as our talents and resources. We recognize in the spirit life, that the talents we possess, the families and society we were raised in, are gifts from a good and gracious God.

And Jesus expects that we love our neighbours as ourselves. Jesus completes his summary of the Torah with, we are to love our neighbours as ourselves. *One man went to his next door neighbour knocking on his door when he was playing the guitar, the man said "Excuse me sir, we can't hear a thing next door" "not a problem" the neighbour replied, so he turned up my amp to number 8 .Should be able to hear it ok now .* The guidance we are given to love others rests on how we love ourselves. For Jesus, loving ourselves is measured by how we listen to the word of God. The words Shema and Oboedire give context to what it means to listen to God as the source of our life, the ground of our being, the font of our existence, and our ultimate concern. This sheds light on what it means to love our neighbour as ourselves. Before we can witness the truth of the Gospel in our daily lives, we must first learn how to listen to the word of God, Shema, Oboedire, with our whole heart, soul, mind and strength. It isn't until we listen to the word of God that we can make the necessary changes, conversion if we will, to get us back onto the road to salvation.