

**Homily – Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
125th Anniversary of St. Ann, Kosciusko – October 29, 2023**

Our faith is not a privilege for scholars, but it is a gift for the wise. Wisdom itself is a gift from God. There is nothing about our faith which is not a sign of God's love for us. In the Lord's response to the Pharisees in the gospel, He does not enter the debate about the order of the precepts in Jewish Law. Nonetheless, He lays the foundation for the whole law and the prophets. The first commandment cannot be observed in isolation. Love of God is made concrete through love of neighbor, and love of neighbor leads to love of God. God's law is very simple to understand, but not easy to live by.

Love for our neighbor encompasses their limitations, as annoying as we may find them. God loves even the people we may find most displeasing. He even calls them His children, just like us. We cannot love God and hate his children. The Lord leaves no room for us to have enemies. This requires the strength that comes from a new perception, capable of seeing the good that exists in each specific person. This leads us to remember that we are all created in God's image. He even "wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth" (1Tm 2:4), as Saint Paul teaches. I become a neighbor to the other by getting closer to them, putting myself at their service, and becoming a mediator between them and God's love. God wants to love my neighbor through me, and to love me through them. God's compassion is shown through works of mercy. How much mercy has been shown in this community throughout 125 years! God's faithfulness to us is shown in our inheritance, made possible by the good works of so many people.

Saint John teaches that God is Love. God himself becomes man and reveals himself to mankind through Jesus Christ. God offers us a

new model of love through the Lord's dedication to humanity. And Jesus tells us that love of neighbor is similar to love of God. Jesus preaches and models for us the way to God the Father. He himself is the way, the truth, and the life. In teaching us to follow him, through the practical method of the works of mercy, he renews our sight, our mind, and our heart. He gives us the Holy Spirit. We are then reborn and sanctified. We are given a new identity, begotten through Baptism. We are dedicated to God. Today, everyone in this community is called to renew their dedication to God and his mercy, in response to God's desire to renew his covenant with each one of you.

To the extent that we allow this to happen to us, we open ourselves to others, we become neighbors. We become so close – even to strangers – that we can receive them as they are, respecting their own identity, and recognizing God's image in them. Remember that your ancestors were once aliens here Our faithful response to God's calling is shown through good works. It is a way of continuing God's work.

Who do I choose as my neighbor? Do I allow others to consider me their neighbor? The Lord invites us to discover the filters through which we see others. Do I judge people according to their cultural level, their ethnic origin, their immigration status, their social class? Seeing everyone as God sees them is a gift from God. It is also an integral part of our faith. We must pray for the gift of a closer relationship with Jesus, which will bring us to closer relationships with others. And we must grow closer to others, which will bring us closer to God.

May Our Lady of Guadalupe teach us to love as she does.