

Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis
Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time, Nov. 3–4, 2018, 60th Anniversary Celebration, Cycle B

Both the Old Testament passage from Deuteronomy, and our Gospel passage from Mark present to us the Shema: The command to love God above all things.

“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone! Therefore, you shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.”

Jesus adds to the Shema, the love of neighbor as the flip side of the coin to love God: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

The Hebrew word “Shema” means to “listen” or “hear.” “Shema, O Israel” – “Hear, O Israel.” This command tells Israel, and us disciples of Jesus that our first responsibility is to “hear.” We are not primarily called to offer sacrifice, or build temples or churches, or even to pray the Psalms. As believers, our first duty is to listen to the voice of God, so we can hear God’s will, and follow God’s will in our lives.

When the ancient Israelites were told: “The Lord is our God, the Lord alone”; they are being told that there is one genuine purpose to their lives, and they cannot afford to consecrate themselves to anything less than their one God.

No matter what shiny objects, what idols or philosophies, positions of power or desire for wealth may attract them, there is but one God – the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. “Yahweh.”

In the Gospel passage from Mark, Jesus is reaffirming the message of Deuteronomy. There is no God but the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and God must be the center of our lives – and if we are listening to this God, we will know that His voice is calling us to love of neighbor. We serve God by serving the needs of each other, because God dwells in each one of us.

This weekend we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the dedication of St. Matthew parish with Archbishop Charles Thompson. Our actual dedication date was October 5, 1958. After almost a year of organizing, raising funds, laying the foundations, and construction, our first facilities were complete, and Archbishop Paul Schulte dedicated St. Matthew Parish on October 5, 1958.

What is a parish? A parish is what our scriptures are talking about this weekend. A parish is a community of faith, who strives to listen to what God has to say; we are a people who remember that the Lord is our God, the Lord alone, and try to live out his will to love and serve each other.

For 60 years now St. Matthew parish, as disciples of Jesus, has been striving to answer the call of Jesus to love God with our whole being, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. As we celebrate our 60th anniversary, we have accomplished much, and St. Matthew today is even reaching out to serve others in many more ways than when we first began. We have much to celebrate, and congratulate ourselves for, but we still have much more to accomplish for the Lord. Let us be grateful for how God has blessed St. Matthew over these 60 years, and ask God to bless St. Matthew with a bright future, so we can continue to listen to God’s voice, and live out His will as His people!