A READING FROM THE BOOK OF *Exodus 22:21-27*

Thus says the Lord: 'You shall not wrong a foreigner or oppress him, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt. You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless. If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a money-lender to him, and you shall not exact interest from him. If ever you take your neighbour's cloak in pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down, for that is his only covering, and it is his cloak for his body; in what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.'

THE WORD OF THE LORD

The response to the psalm is

I love you, LORD, my strength.

I love you, LORD, my strength;
O LORD, my rock, my fortress, my saviour.

I love you, LORD, my strength.

My God, my rock where I take refuge;
my shield, my saving strength, my stronghold.
I cry out, 'O praised be the LORD!'
and see, I am saved from my foes.

I love you, LORD, my strength.

The LORD lives ves, and blest be my Rock!
May the God of my salvation be exalted.

The LORD gives great victories to his king,
and shows merciful love for his anointed.

A READING FROM THE LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS

Brothers and Sisters: You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

THE WORD OF THE LORD

THE GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia.

If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, says the Lord,

and my Father will love him, and we will come to him.

Alleluia.

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

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At that time: When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked

him a question to test him. ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ And he said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.’

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

The English composer Elgar’, made a gift to his friends by a composition of more of a dozen different variation of a theme, each reflecting something about them. A shared event or memory of friendship, the best-known being Nimrod, the bible describes as a mighty hunter, a play on words of his name Jaeger – a word meaning hunter in German. He described him as "for years the dear friend, the valued adviser and the stern critic of many musicians besides the writer; his place has been occupied but never filled". The gift of friendship is with someone encouraging enjoyable and whose honest criticism can be greatly valued. The love of friends has a Greek word “Philia” describing just that. We do love our friends in this way, valuing them above all other acquaintances.

The love of neighbour can be fondness, or kindness at times, showing them respect as a person, as all people to a Christian are related as children of God. It’s not always easy but we can pray for their growth and development.

To Love God is to trust and follow his ways, as creator of life and love and the complexity of human life, so obviously important but at times inaccessible to our reasoning. To trust God is the gift and virtue of hope, in something unseen and yet promised.

His ways are respectful of our reasoning; the 10 commandments are mostly about respecting each other’s lives from ‘conception to a natural end in Cardinal Bernadin of Chicago’s words. Their families

and property, and a search for truth which for us is the respect for God himself.

The call to prayer in the Islamic world at 5.00 pm in Istanbul surprised me as so many men, shedding their shoes, came together in the mosque, the challenge of a Bar Mitzvah to a young adult shows the prayer of trust in God illuminates all the religions founded from a common source. Our time of prayer publicly together and in private strengthens us in our trust in God and the meaning of our lives here on earth.

This week on Thursday we remembered Pope St. John Paul II, a man who combined prayer and active life, visiting many countries, in our Cathedral gathering the sick and touching each one who reached out to him. He was a model of loving God and our neighbour that we all try to do in our lives, responding to Jesus' simply worded answer to a question.