Is God playing favorites? He sides with the poor. What about the rich? Ask those who witness a rich young man leave Jesus, and as He exclaims, “For it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God” (Lk 18:25). Why does God insist on this way of looking at reality?

Jesus, in today’s gospel, discloses the greatest of all commandments. First, He says “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind...” conferring Deut 6:4-5, the Shema or “Listen, Oh Israel” Prayer, and second, you shall love your neighbor as yourself,” quoting Lev 18:19. But because his answers were borne out of the wily scheme of the scribes of the Law, Sadducees and Pharisees in this narrative line to test Jesus (Chapters 22–23 of Matthew), these commandments, as first addressed to these prosperous, popular and powerful sector of society, reveal how Jesus knows well the Torah (Law) and the Prophets as well as the face of the Heavenly Father.

Exodus, in the Old Testament, talks about a two-pronged strong commandment: the prohibition to oppress the poor: the widows and orphans, especially the resident alien (an OFW) for they were once foreign workers in Egypt, and to exact no interest from a loan like the money lenders; one has to return the collateral before the end of the day. Once the cries of these oppressed ones reach His ears, He will listen to them for He says, and here, we hear God’s revelation: “For, I am compassionate” (Ex 22:26).

This option of God for the poor may be understood to mean that He is just and righteous, so he will defend the weak. But this is just half of the picture, God also as shown in the book of Hosea, says, “My heart is overwhelmed, my pity is stirred. I will not give vent to my blazing anger. I will not destroy Ephraim again; For I am God and not a man.” (Hos 11:9a). In the New Testament, the story of Zaccheus, another prosperous, powerful and popular (or notorious) is narrated after Jesus has said earlier, “what is impossible for human beings is possible for God. (Lk 18:27). And Zaccheus’ conversion includes the poor in the restitution picture. Jesus has truly expressed his love for Zaccheus without condition, the way Hosea puts it in calling back Israel to his arm, “I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, “(Hos 14:5a), ushering in the rich helping the poor, the rich acting justly. The ungratuitous love of God is the basis of all.

In the Second Reading, the Thessalonians are praised and commanded by Paul to continue to be a model to other believers in living out their faith in the Lord: “For from you, the Word of the Lord has sounded forth not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place, your faith in God has gone forth...” (1 Thes 1:8).

Yes, we, too, can love freely. Welcoming the stranger. Visiting the prisoner, etc. especially if they are not in any way related to you, but love. Actions that lead us out of our comfort zone, willing to risk our lives because we have a compassionate and loving God. We are undaunted in showing true charity because, like the Psalmist (Ps 18), we exclaim, “I love you, Lord, my strength!”

**GOD’S COMPASSION**

by Bro. Hansel Mapayo, SSP

Becoming Asia’s Foremost Missionaries

Fr. James H. Kroeger, MM

During his 1981 Philippine visit, Pope John Paul II emphasized the centrality of mission. “My brothers and sisters, mindful of the way you have responded so wholeheartedly to the Gospel since it was first proclaimed to you, and urged on by the missionary mandate given to us by Christ, I wish to tell you of my special desire: that the Filipinos will become the foremost missionaries of the Church in Asia.”

“In this regard I would like to make my own the words which Pope Paul VI addressed to you on the occasion of his own pastoral visit to the Philippines: ‘At this moment one cannot but think of the important calling of the peoples of the Philippine Islands. This land has a special vocation to be the city set on the hill, the lamp standing on high (cf. Mt 5:14-16), giving shining witness amid the ancient and noble cultures of Asia. Both as individuals and as a nation you are to show forth the light of Christ by the quality of your lives’ (November 29, 1970).”

“May each of you who have become a dwelling-place of God through Baptism contribute in your own way to the proclamation of the Gospel.” Truly, these are beautiful words of two popes during their Philippine visits!
**THE INTRODUCTORY RITES**

**Entrance Antiphon**
(Cf. Ps 105 [104]: 3–4)
(Recited when there is no opening song.)

Let the hearts that seek the Lord rejoice; turn to the Lord and his strength; constantly seek his face.

**Greeting**
(The sign of the cross is made here.)

All — The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
All — And with your spirit.

**Introduction**
(These [or similar words] may be used to address the assembly.)

P — Jesus reminds us today that his way is not simply fulfilling the detailed precepts of religious laws. Rather, it is a way of life; a way of loving God and neighbor through concrete acts of service.

Today is also Prison Awareness Sunday. We are reminded that there are people behind prison bars who need to experience the love of God through us. Although we think of prisoners as outcasts of society, they are among those whom God wants us to visit, understand, and sustain in hope.

**Penitential Act**

P — Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries. (Pause)

P — You were sent to heal the contrite of heart: Lord, have mercy.
All — Lord, have mercy.
P — You came to call sinners: Christ, have mercy.
All — Christ, have mercy.
P — You are seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us: Lord, have mercy.
All — Lord, have mercy.
P — May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.
All — Amen.

**Gloria**

All — Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father. Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

**Collect**

P — Let us pray. (Pause)

Almighty ever-living God, increase our faith, hope and charity, and make us love what you command, so that we may merit what you promise.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
All — Amen.

**THE LITURGY OF THE WORD**

**First Reading**
(Ex 22:20–26) (Sit)

Love and obedience to the Lord require that the people of Israel show charity and compassion toward others, especially the weak, the alien, and the captives.

A reading from the Book of Exodus

THUS SAYS THE LORD: “You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt. You shall not wrong any widow or orphan. If ever you wrong them and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry. My wrath will flare up, and I will kill you with the sword; then your own wives will be widows, and your children orphans.

“If you lend money to one of your poor neighbors among my people, you shall not act like an extortioner toward him by demanding interest from him. If you take your neighbor’s cloak as a pledge, you shall return it to him before sunset; for this cloak of his is the only covering he has for his body. What else has he to sleep in? If he cries out to me, I will hear him; for I am compassionate.”

— The word of the Lord.
All — Thanks be to God.

**Responsorial Psalm**
(Ps 18)

R — I love you, Lord, my strength.

Sr. M.C.A. Parco, FSP

1. I love you, O LORD, my strength;/ O LORD, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer. (R)
2. My God, my rock of refuge;/ my shield, the horn of my salvation, my stronghold! Praised be the LORD, I exclaim;/ and I am safe from my enemies. (R)
3. The LORD lives and blessed be my rock!/ Exulted be God my savior./ You who gave great victories to your king/ and showed kindness to your anointed. (R)

**Second Reading**
(1 Thes 1:5c-10)

Because they welcomed the apostle’s preaching of the Gospel and remained faithful to it despite all trials, the Thessalonian Christians became a model to other believers. Paul writes to encourage them further.
A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Thessalonians

BROTHERS AND SISTERS: You know what sort of people we were among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, receiving the word in great affliction, with joy from the Holy Spirit, so that you became a model for all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth not only in Macedonia and in Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. For they themselves openly declare about us what sort of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to await his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the coming wrath.

— The word of the Lord.
All — Thanks be to God.

Alleluia (Jn 14:23) (Stand)

All — Alleluia, alleluia. Whoever loves me will keep my word, says the Lord, and my Father will love him and we will come to him. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel (Mt. 22:34–40)

P — A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew. All — Glory to you, O Lord.

WHEN THE PHARISEES heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a scholar of the law tested him by asking, “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.”

— The Gospel of the Lord.
All — Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily (Sit)

Profession of Faith (Sit)

All — I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,

(At the words that follow up to and including and became man, all bow.) and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We pray:

C — That Church leaders may become instrument of hope for all people as they zealously and faithfully live out the gospel value of mercy and compassion in the world embattled with selfishness and the absence of love, we pray: (R)

C — That our government officials, particularly those working in the police and judicial system, may consider prisons and jails as sites for rehabilitation and restoration of broken relationships rather than places of punishment and violence, we pray: (R)

C — That as we celebrate Prison Awareness Sunday, we may give hope to the prisoners and attend to their needs by providing them nutritious food and sufficient and efficient medication, we pray: (R)

C — That those victims of injustice, terrorism, and crime receive proper care and support from the government and social workers so that they too may obtain healing and justice, we pray: (R)

C — That the sick, specially those who are suffering from grave illnesses, and the dying of this day may be comforted by the loving embrace of God’s peace, we pray: (R)

C — That让我们 pray for the urgent concerns of our community and our personal intentions (pause). We pray: (R)

P — Loving Father, fill us with your Spirit of love, so that we may be able to give witness to our faith and fulfill your law of love.

Through Christ our Lord. All — Amen.
Presentation of the Gifts

(Stand)

P — Pray, brethren…
All — May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good, and the good of all his holy Church.

Through Christ our Lord.
All — Amen.

Preface VIII: The Church united by the unity of the Trinity

P — The Lord be with you.
All — And with your spirit.
P — Lift up your hearts.
All — We lift them up to the Lord.
P — Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
All — It is right and just.
P — It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For when your children were scattered afar by sin, through the Blood of your Son and the power of the Spirit, you gathered them again to yourself, that a people, formed as one by the unity of the Trinity, made the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit, might, to the praise of your manifold wisdom, be manifest as the Church.

And so, in company with the choirs of Angels, we praise you, and with joy we proclaim:

All — Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. (Kneel)

Acclamation (Stand)

All — When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord’s Prayer

All — Our Father…
P — Deliver us, Lord…
All — For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and for ever.

Invitation to Peace

Invitation to Communion
(Kneel)

P — Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.
All — Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon
(Cf. Ps 20 [19]: 6)

We will ring out our joy at your saving help and exult in the name of our God.

Prayer after Communion
(Stand)

P — Let us pray. (Pause)

May your Sacraments, O Lord, we pray, perfect in us what lies within them, that what we now celebrate in signs we may one day possess in truth.

Through Christ our Lord.
All — Amen.

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Prayer over the People

P — Bow down for the blessing. (Pause)

Lord God, from the abundance of your mercies provide for your servants and ensure their safety, so that, strengthened by your blessings, they may at all times abound in thanksgiving and bless you with unending exultation.

Through Christ our Lord.
All — Amen.

Dismissal

P — Go forth, the Mass is ended.
All — Thanks be to God.