

# WORD FROM THE PASTOR

## **“YOU ARE NOT FAR FROM THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”**



This is an affirmation that can encourage us to move forward to improve our lives in growing closer to God. We can hear Jesus says to us "You are not far from the Kingdom of God". And you?

This is what He said to this scribe who honestly came to seek enlightenment from Him for His journey in life. Let us look at this scene which speaks volumes to us, because we are, I hope, like this scribe, people who seek God. Our search for God, like that of the scribe, must be based on firm foundations. These are essentials that are recalled here by Jesus.

The first step of our search for God must give priority to God. This is what the believers of the people of Israel had understood. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is the One. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength."

This "Hear, O Israel" has spanned the centuries. It has become the heart of the prayer that every believing Jew repeats in the morning and evening and that Jews today still recite every day. It is like the equivalent of the "Our Father" of Christians. This prayer is called the "Shema' Israel" where the word "Shema'" is the Hebrew word for "Listen."

Listening to the rest of Jesus' response to the scribe, we move on to another essential foundation in our search for God. After answering that the first commandment Jesus, taking up the teaching already present in the Old Testament, continues by saying "And this is the second: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these".

And in the rest of our scene, Jesus recognizes that the scribe is on this path that He is preaching by the "Love one another as I have loved you". He says to him with affection "You are not far from the kingdom of God".

We too are invited, like the scribe, to let ourselves be imbued with the love of God, whom we will love with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind and with all our strength. This love of God will turn us towards others because, as Jesus says elsewhere in the Gospel, especially the most deprived and the poorest, are God himself who comes to meet us in our daily lives.

By sharing the Body and Blood of Christ we find the strength and the impetus necessary to live this challenge of a choice that turns us towards our brothers and sisters following the One who became by His death on the cross, as the Letter to the Hebrews says so well in the second reading, the High Priest "whom we needed: holy, innocent, immaculate" and who is always alive to intercede on our behalf.

***Very Rev. Fr. Lucien Eugene Pierre Ph.D., Pastor, VF – November 3, 2024***