



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



6th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

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"For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." Matt 5:20

This long passage from the Sermon on the Mount can sound "hard," both on the ears and in the heart. But, upon reflection, you'll notice Jesus begins with a note of comfort. He is not preaching anything radical or different. Mosaic Law, known by all Jews of the day, is to be followed. In fact, not one letter will be changed until the end of time, because it is from our One Unchanging God who inscribed the Law *in stone* for Moses, as a sign of God's eternal covenant. This helps us realize the Jesus is stating that *"the New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New.* (St Augustine) This is the Ideal for the new Kingdom on earth that is being ushered in by his appearance. But, he also makes it clear that the new Christian ideal will lift us beyond legalism. *"For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."*

Jesus yearns for his followers to live the Christian Ideal that exceeds the *"righteousness of the Pharisees"* and their literal interpretation of rules, illuminating our life with the *spirit* of the law. We are thus called to recognize that minimal obedience is far beneath the dignity of the merciful Christian that has invited the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in spiritual communion, to dwell within.

Jesus then goes on to give shocking examples of how the Christian Ideal is not to abolish, but exceed and rise above the mere tenets of the law. Concerning anger, not only are we not to murder, but we are also told that anger is deeply sinful and breaks down family and community. If you have sinned against brother or sister, leave your gifts on the altar and go, be reconciled.

Concerning adultery and divorce, Jesus ushers in a radically new Christian Ideal, our call to live a chaste and holy life. All Christians in every vocational state of life are called to chastity, a word and concept that is frowned on in our secular culture today. There is a deeply mystical reality to this concept, whether called to the single life, the married life, the religious life, or the ordained life.

Chastity and Holiness are the perfectly balanced realities of a well-ordered life. Without chastity, even in the married life, the physical body rules the soul. Conversely, when living a chaste life, the soul slowly becomes ruler of the body, which it animates. The chaste person maintains the integrity of the powers of life and love placed in him. From our Roman Missal, Preface VI of the Sundays in Ordinary Time, we pray for this holy life: *"For in you we live and move and have our being, and while in this body we not only experience the daily effects of your care, but even now possess the pledge of life eternal."* From the mystical life we animate and direct our physical body.

Furthermore, from the Catechism of the Catholic Church regarding the virtue of chastity we are given clarity of purpose in pursuing this life of holiness: *"Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity in bodily and spiritual being."* (Ccc 2337) Reflecting this week on chastity as a promise of immortality we see it is expressed notably in friendship with one's spouse, family, our friends and neighbor, which is the ultimate point of this Gospel. Chastity, in every vocation, leads to spiritual communion.

For God loves us. God constantly and continually creates and sustains us. God wants to be with us on the journey of life, wants to bring us to the fullness of peace and joy where we will be with God and our loved ones for all eternity.

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Concerning Anger

“You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire. So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

Concerning Adultery

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.

Concerning Divorce

“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except unless the marriage is unlawful, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Concerning Oaths

“Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.’ But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes’ or ‘No, No’; anything more than this comes from the evil one.

The Gospel of the Lord