

SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Gospel: Matthew 5:17-37

Jesus said to his disciples:

“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 never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

“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.”

“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. “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 on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

“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.”

REFLECTION 1: OFFERING OUR GIFTS AT THE ALTAR

In his autobiography, Mahatma Gandhi tells how in his student days in South Africa he was drawn to Jesus. So, one Sunday he went to a Christian church. He was stopped at the entrance and told that if he desired to worship he was welcome to do so in a church reserved for black people. Gandhi did not pursue the matter any further. He reflected how people regard us the rest of the week to see what we truly meant by our worship together on Sunday.

Jesus in today’s Gospel reading (Matt. 5: 17-37) tells us that if we break even the least of the laws of God, we will be the least in the kingdom of God. He warns us about anger that leads to murder and about lustful looks that lead to adultery. He calls us to a higher standard by encouraging us to prune all sin from our lives. Many of us make out a list of all the things we should do and then tick them off one by one. There’s

This is to show that people are valued more than legal observance and that our friendship with God hinges heavily upon our bonding with other people. Our offering of a gift to God is insincere if we withhold forgiveness from one another. Jesus was the first to make such conduct a requirement for membership in the kingdom he had brought near. Until the reign of God is established and acknowledged in every human heart, Jesus continues to challenge us to move beyond the mere letter of the law to that area of grace where love knows no limits. This passage, found in a church in East Germany, will comfort us:

I am with you - when everything breaks down God does not forsake us

I am with you - when you are desperate, alone and lonely and think you can't go on

I am with you - when nobody understands you or listens to you and all the evidence is that nobody likes you anymore

I am with you - like the sun that warms you, the flower that delights you, the cloud that envelops you

I am - the friend who never forsakes you, the sister who shares all with you, the brother by your side in good days and bad

I am - the mother who understands you completely, the father who will do anything to protect you

I am - always there for you, for I am the God who loves you.