

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

cf. Matt 11:25

R/. Alleluia, alleluia.

Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth;
you have revealed to little ones the mysteries of the kingdom.

R/. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Matt 5:17-37; L76A

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.

Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away,

not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place.

Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments

and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

“You have heard that it was said to your ancestors,
You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.

But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; and whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ will be answerable to the Sanhedrin; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ will be liable to fiery Gehenna.

Reflecting on the Gospel

The child was asked to clean his room before he could go out to play. He replied, “What’s the least I have to do?” He wondered if making the bed would count, or if the floor had to be clean too. Do his clean clothes need to be put away, or only left in the laundry bin and tucked away in his closet? What about under his bed? Would that be checked, and would it have to be clean? The exasperated father wondered when the child would want a clean room for his own sake and not simply because the father had asked. Such an attitude on the part of the child is similar to what’s on display in today’s gospel.

To those people who want to be right with God, but wonder what is the minimum required to achieve that relationship, Jesus has an answer. Jesus takes certain aspects of the law of Moses and expands them. Rather than a command not to kill, Jesus says, do not grow angry. Rather than a command not to commit adultery, Jesus says not to look at another with lust. In other words, the Mosaic Law is not simply the bare minimum we need to do to be right with God. Instead, we need to go above and beyond the letter of the law if we are to be followers of Christ. Merely fulfilling the minimum is not enough.

When Jesus responds in this way, we may crave a return to the minimum!

How can I keep myself from growing angry, which is a natural human response to perceived injustice? The standard Jesus sets may seem impossible to realize. The statement about plucking out one’s eye is certainly hyperbole, and recognized as such by the early church. The standard established by Jesus fulfills the law rather than abolishing it. Jesus’ teaching goes to the heart of the matter. His advice to let “yes” mean “yes” and “no” mean “no” is a clear statement to that effect. Disciples of Jesus speak the truth without equivocation.

So when we want to ask, “What’s the least I have to do?” we may need to reconsider the question. When we desire a relationship with Christ for its own sake, and not simply because we’ve been somehow coerced, a life of faith flows naturally. We no longer count the minimum but instead live in a relationship of trust, fidelity, and love.

Living the Paschal Mystery

Living our lives as disciples of Jesus means that we follow a standard different from the world’s standard. Jesus’ injunction not to look on another with lust, or with anger, is a prime indication of that. In the ancient world (and even in the modern), it can seem easier to cover up a temptation so as not to deal with it. If looking on another causes lust, let’s cover up the other or remove the other! But Jesus’ response goes to the heart of a person. His response is not to cover up the temptation, but to challenge the person not to look on another with lust. Jesus places the responsibility on the individual, not on the object of temptation or anger. In this world there are things that will cause us anger. As disciples, we



Continued in Appendix A, p. 268, or Matt 5:20-22a, 27-28, 33-34a, 37 in Appendix A, p. 269.

are not to harbor anger; we are not to harbor lust. Simply acting on these Christian precepts to eschew anger and lust will mark us as disciples, for we will be following a standard not of the world.

Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: "Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.'"

To the point: Jesus calls us to lead lives of integrity where we follow not only

PROMPTS FOR FAITH-SHARING

In the first reading the writer of the book of Sirach tries to convince his community that because God has given them free will, it is not possible to blame their sin on the "will of God." What role do you see personal responsibility taking in healing and reconciliation within your own family, parish, and

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, February 16, 2020

Gospel (cont.)

Matt 5:17-37; L76A

Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar,
and there recall that your brother
has anything against you,
leave your gift there at the altar,
go first and be reconciled with your brother,
and then come and offer your gift.
Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court.
Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge,
and the judge will hand you over to the guard,
and you will be thrown into prison.
Amen, I say to you,
you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.

"You have heard that it was said,
You shall not commit adultery.
But I say to you,
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 to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna.

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 to have your whole body go into Gehenna.

"It was also said,
Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce.
But I say to you,
whoever divorces his wife—unless the marriage is unlawful—
causes her to commit adultery,
and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

"Again you have heard that it was said to your ancestors,
*Do not take a false oath,
but make good to the Lord all that you vow.*
But I say to you, do not swear at all;
not by heaven, for it is God's throne;
nor by the earth, for it is his footstool;
nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.
Do not swear by your head,
for you cannot make a single hair white or black.
Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.'
Anything more is from the evil one."

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Gospel

or Matt 5:20-22a, 27-28, 33-34a, 37

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