



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF WOLLONGONG

FAITH CIRCLES

WEEKLY SMALL
GROUP CATECHESIS

6TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A



SUNDAY GOSPEL

The Virtuous Life

Matthew 5:17-37

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish them but to complete them. Therefore, the man who infringes even one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered the least in the kingdom of heaven; but the man who keeps them and teaches them will be considered great in the kingdom of heaven.

'For I tell you, if your virtue goes no deeper than that of the scribes and

Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.

'You have learnt how it was said to our ancestors: You must not kill; and if anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court. But I say this to you: anyone who is angry with his brother will answer for it before the court; if you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering. ■

GOSPEL REFLECTION

Fr. Michael J. Dyer

Today's Gospel can be read in its longer or shorter form. Either way, it is advisable to study its surrounding verses in order to deepen an appreciation for the compelling, radical and authoritative teachings of Jesus. Our appreciation can be enhanced further by reading and praying the other Biblical texts prescribed for today's liturgy. These, especially the First Reading, are usually curtain-raisers for the Gospel. Each reading calls us to deeper holiness. All readings exhort us to follow the law, the prophets and the Lord, to reject anger, adultery, divorce and oaths. Moreover, they urge us to be sincere by transforming our words into actions. Are we willing to respond passionately to these exhortations or do we, like the Scribes, Pharisees and Disciples before us, resist the call of Jesus to deeper holiness? Let us pray for the grace we need to say "yes" if we mean yes, "no" if we mean no"; and let us pray for the courage to keep the commandments and to behave faithfully. This is within our power, especially if we rely on the things revealed to us by the Spirit of Jesus who "reaches the depths of everything, even the depths of God." ■

A WORD FROM POPE FRANCIS



Today's theme is Jesus' attitude toward the Jewish Law. Jesus did not want to do away with the Commandments; rather, he wanted

to bring them to fulfilment.

However, this "fulfilment" of the Law requires a higher kind justice, a more authentic observance.

But what does this "fulfilment" of the Law mean? What is this superior justice? Jesus answers this question with a few examples. Jesus was practical and used examples to make himself understood, comparing the old Law with his teachings. He begins with the fifth of the Ten Commandments: "You have heard 'You shalt not kill' ...

But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to council". In this way, Jesus reminds us that words can kill!

When we say that a person has the tongue of a snake, what does that mean? That their words kill! Not only is it wrong to take the life of another, but it is also wrong to bestow the poison of anger upon him, strike him with slander, and speak ill of him.

Love of neighbour is a fundamental attitude that Jesus speaks of, and he says that our relationship with God cannot be honest if we are not willing to make peace with our neighbour. We are called to reconcile with our neighbour before showing our devotion to the Lord in prayer.

In all of this we see that Jesus does not give importance simply to disciplinary compliance and exterior conduct. He goes to the Law's roots focusing, first and foremost, on the intention and the human heart, from which our good and bad actions originate. To obtain good and honest conduct, legal rules are not enough. We need a deep motivation, an expression of a hidden wisdom, God's wisdom, which can be received through the Holy Spirit. Through faith in Christ, we can open ourselves to the action of the Spirit which enable us to experience divine love. ■

TALKING POINTS

1. How do you understand the difference between a simple disciplinary compliance with rules and regulations and the call to deeper holiness, justice and fulfilment of the law's purpose to which Jesus invites you?
2. What do you find most challenging in today's gospel and reflections? What is one area – anger, forgiveness, reconciliation, promises – in which you could improve in a small way this week.

PRAYER POINTS

Pray for each other: Ask about and pray for the needs of the group members. Individuals might pray for themselves or ask someone else to pray for them.

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Reflect: Leading a life of deeper holiness is a matter of love, an intention to come to the heart of the matter. Spend some time with Jesus inviting him to open your heart to his love in order that you can fulfil his call to a holy life more fully.

Response: *Lord Jesus, hear our prayer, give us hearts of love.*

Closing Prayer: Loving God, you invite us to enter into your kingdom by fulfilling the deeper intent of the law – deep love for everyone. Guide our hearts and minds to be people of holiness, justice, peace and love in the world. In Jesus' name. Amen.

