

**GOSPEL**

*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. I tell you solemnly, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, one little stroke, shall disappear from the Law until its purpose is achieved. 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 a man calls his brother "Fool" he will answer for it before the Sanhedrin; and if a man calls him "Renegade" he will answer for it in hell fire. So then, 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. Come to terms with your opponent in good time while you are still on the way to the court with him, or he may hand you over to the judge and the judge to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison. I tell you solemnly, you will not get out till you have paid the last penny.

'You have learnt how it was said: You must not commit adultery. But I say this to you: if a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye should cause you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; for it will do you less harm to lose one part of you than to have your whole body thrown into hell. And if your right hand should cause you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; for it will do you less harm to lose one part of you than to have your whole body go to hell.

'It has also been said: Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a writ of dismissal. But I say this to you: everyone who divorces his wife, except for the case of fornication, makes her an adulteress; and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

'Again, you have learnt how it was said to our ancestors: You must not break your oath, but must fulfil your oaths to the Lord. But I say this to you: do not swear at all, either by heaven, since that is God's throne; or by the earth, since that is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, since that is the city of the great king. Do not swear by your own head either, since you cannot turn a single hair white or black. All you need say is "Yes" if you mean yes, "No" if you mean no; anything more than this comes from the evil one.'

**REFLECTION OF POPE LEO XIV**

*15 February 2026*

Today we hear a part of the Gospel passage of the "Sermon on the Mount" (cf. Mt 5:17-37). After having proclaimed the Beatitudes, Jesus invites us to enter into the newness of the Kingdom of God. In order to guide us on this journey, he reveals the true meaning of the precepts of the Law of Moses. They are not meant to satisfy an external religious need of feeling "righteous" before God, but to bring us into a relationship of love with God and with our brothers and sisters. For this reason, Jesus says that he did not come to abolish the Law, but to bring it to fulfillment (cf. v. 17).

The Law is fulfilled precisely by love, which brings its profound meaning and ultimate purpose to completion. We are called to achieve a righteousness that "exceeds" (cf. v. 20) that of the scribes and Pharisees, a righteousness that is not limited to observing the commandments, but that opens us to love and compels us to love. Jesus examines some of the precepts of the Law that refer to concrete cases, and uses linguistic formulas called antinomies to show the difference between formal religious righteousness and the righteousness of the Kingdom of God: on the one hand, "You have heard that it was said to the men of old," and on the other, Jesus affirms, "But I say to you" (cf. vv. 21-37).

This approach is very important, because it shows that the Law was given to Moses and the prophets as a way to come to know God and his plan for us

and for history or, to use an expression of Saint Paul, as a pedagogue who guided us to him (cf. Gal 3:23-25). But now, God himself, in the person of Jesus, has come among us, bringing the Law to fulfillment, making us children of the Father and giving us the grace to enter into a relationship with him as children and as brothers and sisters among ourselves.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus teaches us that true righteousness consists in love and that, within every precept of the Law, we must learn to identify a call to love. Indeed, it is not sufficient to refrain from killing a person physically if one then kills with words and undermines the dignity of the other (cf. Mt 5:21-22). Similarly, it is not enough to be technically faithful to one's spouse and not commit adultery if the relationship lacks mutual tenderness, listening, respect, care for the other and shared goals (cf. vv. 27-28, 31-32). We could add other examples to the ones that Jesus himself offers us. The Gospel offers us this valuable teaching: minimal righteousness is not enough; great love is needed.

Let us invoke together the Virgin Mary, who gave Christ to the world, the One who fulfills the Law and the plan of salvation. May she intercede for us, help us to understand better the Kingdom of God and to live out its call for righteousness.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/Homily?



**Head:** What does Jesus mean when he says he has come not to abolish the Law but to fulfil it — and how does that shift the focus from rule-keeping to love?



**Heart:** Where in my life am I tempted to settle for “technical correctness” or minimal righteousness, instead of allowing love to shape my words, reactions, and relationships from the inside?



**Hands:** What concrete step of reconciliation, tenderness, or integrity is Jesus asking of me now so that my “yes” and “no” truly reflect a heart formed by love?

## PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the ‘Glory Be’.