

Homily of Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A, 2023

Sirach 15:15-20; Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34; 1 Corinthians 2:6-10; Matthew 5:17-37

The first reading says, "If you choose you can keep the commandments, they will serve you; if you trust God, you shall live; he has set before you fire and water; to whichever you choose, stretch forth your hand. Before man are life and death, good and evil, whichever he chooses shall be given him" (Sirach 15:15-17). God gives each of us the free will, which makes us responsible for our choices and our actions. Bad choices and actions have bad consequences, while good choices and actions have good rewards. This is in line with the natural law of cause and effect. "A person reaps what he or she sows" (Galatians 6:7). Sirach continues, "No one does God command to act unjustly, to none does he give license to sin" (Sirach 15:20). Rather, God has given us his Holy Spirit to lead us, to guide us, and to direct us. We pray to make good choices according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

However, we need to recognize the fact that there are times when conditions or situations take away one's free will to choose what to do or what not to do. At such times, we entrust ourselves to the power of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew Chapters 5 to 7 contains extensive and radical teachings and instructions by Jesus. In Chapter 7, Jesus raises himself and his teaching above Moses and Mosaic Laws. Jesus shows himself as possessing divine authority. Six times in the gospel reading, Jesus declared, "I say to you" to broaden the interpretation of Mosaic Laws and to emphasize that obeying the letter of the law is not enough. Jesus draws our attention to obeying the spirit of God's law.

Jesus instructs us that while it is against the law to kill, it is also sinful to remain in prolonged anger against anyone. Anger is one of the seven deadly sins. Anger is a deadly tool for the devil. That is why St. Paul cautions us, "Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun set on your anger, and do not leave room for the devil" (Ephesians 4:26). The devil does not cause much destruction without anger. That is why Jesus encourages us to choose the path of peace and reconciliation. He says, "Go first and reconcile with your brother/sister, and then come to offer your gift." God detests the gift of the angry person and the unforgiving person (Proverbs 15:8).

Jesus says, "... whoever says to his brother, 'Raqa,' will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna." 'Raqa' in Hebrew means 'worthless.' It is sinful to destroy anyone's personhood or humiliate anyone by what we do or what we say.

Jesus draws our attention to the sin of lust (uncontrolled strong sexual desire), which is, also, one of the seven deadly sins. Fornication and adultery are mortal sins, but they are only products of lust. If sexual desire is controlled, fornication, adultery, rape, and other sexual sins are controlled. Let us pray for self-control, which is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. It is with self-control that we can tear out our right eye and cut off our right hand to avoid falling into sin. Jesus means that we avoid occasions and whoever and whatever that can lead us to sin no matter how dear and how precious they are to us.

Jesus says, "Do not swear at all." Since taking vows, oaths, and swearing in ceremonies exist in almost every culture, we can interpret that Jesus means we must never swear falsely. Let our 'Yes' mean our 'Yes,' and let our 'No' mean our 'No.'

St. Paul states in the second reading that the word that is given to us today is not a wisdom of this age but a wisdom of God to those who are mature, which is revealed through the Spirit. We pray that the Holy Spirit who scrutinizes everything, even the depths of God, opens our mind to understand the word and wisdom revealed to us today in order that we may attain spiritual maturity.

We conclude with praying Psalm 139:23-24, "Search (*Scrutinize*) me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts. See if my steps are going astray, and lead me in your eternal way." Amen.

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