

## Homily of Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C, 2025

1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23; Psalm 103:1-4, 8, 10, 12-13; 1 Corinthians 15:45-49; Luke 6:27-38

God sent Saul, the king of Israel, on a mission “to put the sinful Amalekites under a ban of destruction; [to] fight against them until you have exterminated them.” But Saul disobeyed the Lord. He took the king captive and “pounced on the spoil.” When Samuel confronted Saul, he gave his excuse, “from the spoil the army took sheep and oxen, the best of what had been banned, to sacrifice to the Lord” (1 Samuel 15:14-20). This is an example of, “never accept responsibility,” “make excuses,” “find someone to blame.”

Samuel announced to Saul, “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obedience to the Lord’s command? Obedience is better than sacrifice, to listen, better than the fat of rams. For a sin of divination is rebellion, and arrogance, the crime of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord in turn has rejected you as king” (1 Samuel 15:22-23).

When Saul realized that God had chosen David to succeed him, he was very angry and made eleven attempts to kill David:

*- Saul attempted to kill David with a spear (1 Sam. 18:11); - Saul planned to have David fall by the hands of the Philistines by giving David his daughter Michal in marriage (1 Sam. 18:17, 21); - Saul ordered his servants to kill David (1 Sam. 19:1); - Saul attempted to kill David with a spear (1 Sam. 19:10); - Saul sent messengers to kill David (1 Sam. 19:11); - Saul sent messengers to bring David back so he could kill David (1 Sam. 19:15); - Saul sent messengers to kill David (1 Sam. 19:20); - Saul sent messengers again to kill David (1 Sam. 19:21); - Saul went himself to kill David (1 Sam. 19:22); - Saul pursued David to kill him (1 Sam. 23:15); - Saul pursued David to kill him (1 Sam. 26:2).*

The eleventh attempt is as we read in the first reading, “Saul went down to the desert of Ziph with **three thousand men** ... to search for David.” We can see how desperate Saul was. Today’s first reading informs us how David had the opportunity to get revenge against Saul but chose to spare Saul’s life. At that time when the law was, “eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot” (Exodus 21:24), David stood out in showing mercy and forgiveness to Saul who made eleven attempts on his life.

David is a perfect example of Jesus’ teaching in today’s gospel: “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic...” (Luke 6:27-29). This is a very radical teaching since it is typical of human nature to do good to those who are good to us and to punish those who treat us badly. David and Jesus teach us today that this must not be so.

This teaching by Jesus is a difficult teaching to accept, especially for those who are in pain and grieving due to the wickedness of human beings and where the enemies are unrelenting. The teaching is, “Do not take revenge.” “Do not retaliate.” St. Paul writes, “Do not repay anyone evil for evil... for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord’” (Romans 12:17). We pray for God’s grace, protection, healing, and intervention.

However, Christianity does not encourage cowardice and subservience. St. Paul writes, “For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control” (2 Timothy 1:7). Christianity teaches legitimate defense of oneself and legitimate defense of life and property by legitimate authority. Jesus says, “Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour of night when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into” (Matthew 24:43). “... one who does not have a sword should sell his cloak and buy one” (Luke 22:36). Legitimate defenses of life and property can be seen in these statements. If Pope Urban II had not called the Crusade in 1095 against the Muslims, perhaps, Christianity would not have survived. It is in support for the defense and protection departments that Churches provide chaplains for the spiritual needs of the personnel.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states in numbers 2265 and 2266, “Legitimate defense can be not only a right but a grave duty for one who is responsible for the lives of others. The defense of the common good requires that an unjust aggressor be rendered unable to cause harm.” “For this reason, those who legitimately hold authority also have the right to use arms to repel aggressors against the civil community entrusted to their responsibility.” We pray that legitimate authorities do not fail to carry out this divine giving responsibility. We pray that legitimate authorities do not, themselves, become wicked oppressors of the weak, the vulnerable, and the defenseless, as it is the case in many places and many countries.

May God continue to protect and save his own from their enemies as he protected and saved David from King Saul. God promises, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay.” This promise came true concerning David and King Saul. May we keep God’s word, blessing those who curse us and praying for those who hate us. And may God’s promises continue to be fulfilled. Amen.

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