

Homily For Friday of the 10th Week of Ordinary Time - Year II

St Peter's 8:30am Mass - June 10, 2022

1 Kings 17:7-16 "The Lord was not in the wind or the earthquake but in the silence."

Psalm 116:10-18 "I believe I shall see the face of the Lord in the land of the living."

Matthew 5:27-32 "It is better to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell."

A New Kind of Law

Introduction

I think for many of us it has been an exciting time, coming back to in-person community. Lent and Easter seemed to have new meaning this year because of that. We are possibly a smaller community than before the recent dark time, although we continue to be in harmony with those who join us consistently through livestream. Overall, now we will go back to Ordinary Time having more contact with each other. Let's pray for this to last, even while various forces in our culture seek to keep us enslaved by fear. Remember that fear destroys love even more than does hatred, although they are very much related.

This week, as we continue to travel through the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus continues to provide intensely new meaning for old laws. Today, he has something to say about how we use our eyes and our hands. Today's culture, like Israel at times, both want to throw off the ten commandments. God gave those commandments for our good, not our enslavement. The Kingdom of heaven is at stake. And so, there is continuity between the old law and the new. There is not the old way of being Catholic and the new. It is one continuous as the way God has revealed himself to fallen humanity becomes more and more clear to those who follow him, who believe him who love him, and who do what he says.

Matthew

Jesus acts with divine authority to perfect and deepen the moral codes of the Mosaic Law. Jesus is a new Moses and the lawgiver of the new covenant. He uses alarming images to underscore the need to avoid occasions of sin, the sins themselves, and the eternal punishment to which they lead.

As in his treatment of the fifth commandment, Jesus intensifies and interiorizes the sixth commandment concerning adultery. He goes beyond to teach that lustful thoughts are a kind of adultery in the heart. He wants us to eliminate the root of sinful actions and to love from the heart. The heart was considered the region of moral disposition. Our "eyes" speak about what's in our hearts. Saint Paul says "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit." (1Cor 6:19). Pope Francis says that adultery, like all the other sins, is first conceived in the depth of our being and, once the wrong choice is made in the heart." (Francis)

Lust is selfish desire. To embrace this desire poisons one's heart and blocks the development of love. It would be better immediately to cut out a temptation to lust, or any other source of sin in our lives, rather than to let it erode our soul and lead us to hell. Losing an eye or a hand does keep us from sinning. It takes more than that.

Today, practicing chastity and the virtue of holy purity is considered outdated, or could even take away our freedom. Jesus moves the bar. Observance of the law is not simply fulfilling minimum conditions. It's not getting 50% to pass the test. God gives us his law, which is to be written in our hearts, for us to reach the summit. It's not the law of minimum effort. I haven't killed anyone so I'm fine. I haven't had an affair so I am faithful. To be a disciple is to be like the one who has not held himself back even the slightest. He has given us his total self. That's not an easy standard but you and I can't pretend to be his disciples unless we are at least willing to walk that path which he has walked. Mediocrity is not an option.

Today, we have Sex in the city. Today, porn sites receive more website traffic in the U.S. than Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Netflix, Pinterest, and Zoom combined.

Call to Action

Today, Christ aims high and points out his authority over the sixth and ninth Commandments, those referring to our sexuality and to our purity of thought. We must, therefore, cut out the root of all evil and avoid those thoughts and occasions that would lead us to do what God does not want us to. This is what these words, that may look so radical and exaggerated to us, actually mean.

As always, prayer remains at the top of our spiritual 'To Do' list. St. Alphonsus Liguori puts it like this: "If we neglect to pray, and thus break the chain of prayers, the chain of graces shall also be broken, and we shall lose the grace of perseverance." Today's psalm also provides a profound approach to prayer: "Your face, Lord, do I seek. Do not hide your face from me. Do not turn your servant away in anger, you who have been my help. I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

Friday fasting becomes normal again in ordinary time. This is one way to break the mediocrity of daily living in an indulgent culture. Ultimately, we must recommit ourselves to do what Jesus tells us. That's what Mary said at Cana and says again today. Let's follow that commandment. I don't think we will need to cut off hands or gouge out eyes if we do. I don't think we will be mediocre if we do.

Key Passages

1 Kings:

2 Cor: *The one who raised the Lord Jesus will also raise us with Jesus, and bring us with you into his presence.*

Psalms: *Your face, Lord, do I seek. Do not hide your face from me. Do not turn your servant away in anger, you who have been my help. I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord. Be strong.*

Matthew: *Jesus said to his disciples, "You shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that 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. 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 for your whole body to go to into hell. It was also said, Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce, but I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.*