

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, February 16, 2020

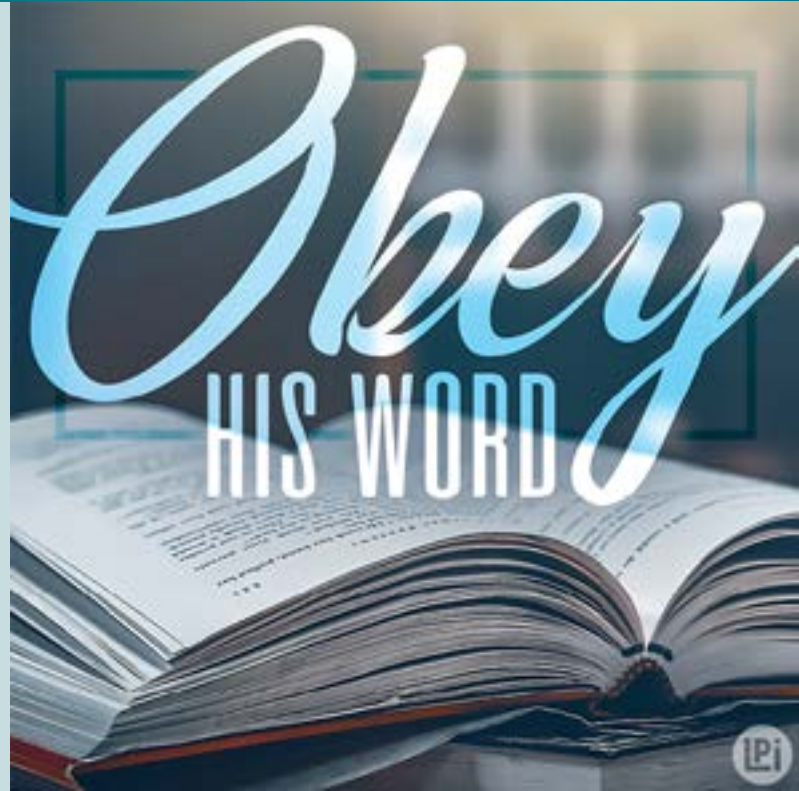
The Law of The Lord

Written Allison Gingras

Sirach 15:15-20

1 Corinthians 2:6-10

Matthew 5:17-37



Jesus “did not come to abolish the law.” Instead, he perfects and fulfills it. The scribe’s and pharisee’s mistake wasn’t that they strove to keep the letter of the law. Most problematic was the spirit in which they kept the law.

In the [Gospel](#) for this Sunday, Jesus poignantly prompts us to ponder our behavior and challenges us to make necessary changes in any of the areas where we lack or struggle to abide by the law. As Jesus speaks to us in Matthew’s Gospel, this long passage incorporates many habits of thought and action we should examine carefully, making sure to keep the commandments as intended and not as we perceive.

Let us begin with, “You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment,” especially regarding how we interact with others. One hopes that for the majority of the population, the idea of killing never crosses our minds. Therefore, we may harbor a tendency to dismiss this commandment because it doesn’t relate to us. We can almost add an invisible check mark with a sigh of relief, thinking that we have at least one out of the ten under control!

Jesus explains this law further, reminding us to look deeper at the disposition we display toward others. Anger showed — or just merely held against — our sisters and brothers in Christ and left unresolved leaves us liable for judgment. While we may not always be able to control our immediate internal reaction to another person’s words or behavior, we absolutely can (and for our spiritual good, should) control what we do next.

Jesus admonishes not to remain in anger nor to act upon it but to bring our concerns to our brother before coming to make an offering to God at the altar. At the beginning of each Eucharist celebration, we participate in the penitential rite. The purpose of this rite is to ask God to forgive our sins, so that we may offer the sacrifice of the Mass worthily. The Eucharist is not only a sacrament that we receive. It is also a sacrifice that we offer. Here, we call to mind our sins, and the priest recites, "Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries."

This section of the penitential rite connects beautifully to Jesus' teaching: "Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift." (Mt 5:23-24) The next time you are at Mass, try not to only recite the words of the penitential rite but also call to mind any unresolved animosities you hold against your brethren. Ask God for the grace to forgive them, so you may fully participate in the mystical and miraculous liturgy.

Next, let us look at Jesus' words about the commandment concerning adultery. Possibly, you can recall from your youth the lyrics in the children's song: "Be careful little eyes what you see," which teaches the importance of guarding our hearts by what we allow ourselves to see. What activities do we mindlessly participate in without even considering the spiritual implications? When my children were teenagers and flipping through the channels looking for a show to watch, I would remind them, "Be sure to pick something you could watch with Grandma ... and Jesus." This commandment reminder from Jesus extends far beyond looking at another person with lust, but in preventing ourselves from any temptation of the flesh by being preemptive in our media, entertainment, and leisure activity choices.

The danger for the scribes and pharisees was getting too caught up in the minutia. But for modern-day Christians, perhaps it is the opposite. Maybe we are not paying *enough* attention

to the details of our lives. We must ask ourselves, "How do we wish to be considered in heaven?" Jesus guides our understanding of the importance of keeping these laws. "Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Mt 5:19)

Allison Gingras

PRAYER

Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Blessed are they who guard their eyes, and keep them fixed on you.

Blessed are they who settle their differences with love, mercy, and kindness.

Blessed are they who observe the precepts of the Lord with their heart.

Blessed are they who let their yes mean yes, and glorify the Lord in every action.

Blessed be the Lord, now and forever.

Amen.