

# Friday 1st of Lent

**Gospel text (Mt 5,20-26): Jesus said to his disciples, «I tell you, then, that if you are not righteous in a much broader way than the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. You have heard that it was said to our people in the past: ‘Do not commit murder; anyone who does kill will have to face trial’. But now I tell you: whoever gets angry with a brother or sister will have to face trial. Whoever insults a brother or sister deserves to be brought before the council; whoever calls a brother or a sister "Fool" deserves to be thrown into the fire of hell.**

**»So, if you are about to offer your gift at the altar and you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, go at once and make peace with him, and then come back and offer your gift to God. Don't forget this: be reconciled with your opponent quickly when you are together on the way to court. Otherwise he will turn you over to the judge, who will hand you over to the police, who will put you in jail. There you will stay, until you have paid the last penny».**

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***«Leave your gift there in front of the altar, go at once and make peace with him [your brother]»***

Fr. Thomas LANE  
*(Emmitsburg, Maryland, United States)*

Today, the Lord challenges us to convert as He speaks about what goes on in our hearts. The commandment says «Do not commit murder» (Mt 5:21), but Jesus reminds us that there are other ways of killing life in others. We can kill life in others by harboring excessive anger towards them in our hearts or not treating them respectfully and calling them “Fool” (cf. Mt 5:22).

The Lord calls us to be people of integrity: «Leave your gift there in front of the altar, go at once and make peace with him» (Mt 5:24), i.e. the faith we profess in our celebration of the Liturgy should flow over into our daily lives and affect how we live. So Jesus asks us to be reconciled with our enemies. A first step along the road to reconciliation is to pray for our enemies as Jesus requested. If we find this difficult it is good to remember and picture in our minds Jesus dying for those whom we dislike. If we have been seriously hurt by others let us pray for healing of painful memories and the grace to forgive. As you pray, ask the Lord to walk back in time with you to the time and place of the hurt and replace your hurt with his love so that you may be free to forgive.

As Pope Benedict XVI wrote, «we cannot communicate with the Lord if we do not communicate with one another. If we want to present ourselves to him, we must also take a step towards meeting one another. To do this we must learn the great lesson of forgiveness: we must not let the gnawings of resentment work in our soul, but must open our hearts to the magnanimity of listening to others, open our hearts to understanding them, eventually to accepting their apologies, to generously offering our own».

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***«If you are not righteous in a much broader way than the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven»***

Fr. Joaquim MESEGUER García  
(Rubí, Barcelona, Spain)

Today, Jesus exhorts us to go beyond legalisms: «I tell you, then, that if you are not righteous in a much broader way than the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees, you cannot enter the Kingdom of heaven» (Mt 5:20). The Law of Moses aims at the necessary minimum to guarantee coexistence; but Christians, led by Jesus Christ, and full of the Holy Spirit, have to try to overcome this minimum to reach the climax of love. The Scribes and the Pharisees were strictly abiding by the Commandments; when looking over our own life, could we say the same? Let us therefore be careful not to look down on their religious experience.

What Jesus is teaching us today is to avoid feeling too safe just because we try hard to fulfill those requirements that may render us righteous in the face of God, as the Scribes and the Pharisees used to do; but, rather, to put our emphasis in our love

for God and for our brothers; the kind of love that will allow us to go beyond the coldness of the Law while humbly recognizing our own shortcomings in a sincere conversion.

There are those who say: 'I am good for I do not steal, nor do I kill, nor have I ever hurt anybody'; but Jesus admonishes us that this is not enough, as there are other ways to steal and to kill. We can kill someone else's illusions; we can look down on our neighbor, overshadow him or alienate him; we can bear malice against him, and all this means killing too, not physically but, indeed, morally and spiritually.

Throughout our life, we can find many adversaries, but we are our worst enemy when we stray from the Gospel. This is why, in seeking reconciliation with our brothers, first we have to be reconciled with ourselves. Saint Augustine tells us: «As long as you are your own adversary, the Word of God will also be your adversary. Become friendly with yourself and you will have become reconciled with it».