Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Gospel text (*Mt* 5:17-37): Jesus said to his disciples: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place. 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. I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

“You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, ‘You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, ‘Raqa,’ will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ will be liable to fiery Gehenna. 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. Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court with him. Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you, 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. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna. 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 to have your whole body go into Gehenna.

“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce.’ But I say to you,

whoever divorces his wife —unless the marriage is unlawful— causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. Again you have heard that it was said to your ancestors, ‘Do not take a false oath, but make good to the Lord all that you vow.’ But I say to you, do not swear at all; not by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Do not swear by your head, for you cannot make a single hair white or black. Let your ‘Yes’ mean ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No’ mean ‘No.’ Anything more is from the evil one.”

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets”

Fr. Givanildo dos SANTOS Ferreira
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Today, Jesus tells us, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets” (Mt 5:17). What is the Law? What are the Prophets? By the Law and the Prophets, we understand two different groups of books of the Old Testament. The Law refers to the writings attributed to Moses; the Prophets, as the name itself indicates, are the writings of the prophets and the wisdom books.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus refers to what we consider the summary of the moral code of the Old Testament: the commandments of the Law of God. According to the mind of Jesus, the Law does not consist of merely external principles. No. The Law is not an imposition coming from outside. Quite the opposite. In truth, the Law of God corresponds to the ideal of perfection that is rooted in the heart of every human being. This is why the one who keeps the commandments not only feels fulfilled in his human aspirations, but also attains the perfection of Christianity, or, in the words of Jesus, attains the perfection of the Kingdom of God: “Whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:19).

“But I say to you” (Mt 5:22). The fulfillment of the Law is not summed up in the letter, since “for the letter brings death, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor 3:6). It is in this sense that Jesus commits His authority to interpret the Law according to its most authentic Spirit. In Jesus’ interpretation, the Law is extended to its ultimate consequences: respect for life is joined to the eradication of hatred, vengeance, and insult; chastity of the body is expressed through fidelity and indissolubility; the truthfulness of the given word is shown in respect for commitments. In fulfilling the Law, Jesus “fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear” (Second Vatican Council).

The example of Jesus invites us to that perfection of Christian life which carries out in actions what is proclaimed in words.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “God does not accept the sacrifice of a sower of disunion. God can be appeased by prayers that make peace. To God, the better offering is peace, brotherly concord.” (Saint Cyprian)

- “To pray for a person with whom I am irritated is a beautiful step forward in love, and an act of evangelization.” (Francis)

- “ ‘Owe no one anything, except to love one another’ (Rom 13:8). The communion of the Holy Trinity is the source and criterion of truth in every relationship (...)” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 2845).