

Thursday of the Tenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 5:20-26): Jesus said to his disciples: “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.”

“Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the Kingdom of heaven”

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Today, Jesus invites us to go beyond what any reliable law-abiding person can go. Even, without falling into any evil deeds, routine quite often hardens the desire of

seeking sanctity, by comfortably adapting ourselves to the habit of just a good behavior, and nothing else. St. John Bosco used to say: «The good is the enemy of the best». It is there, where the Master's Word reaches us, inviting us to be righteous in a “much broader” way (cf. Mt 5:20) that starts from a different attitude. Bigger things that, paradoxically, look lesser and smaller. To get angry, to scorn and disown your brother are not the right things for the disciple of the Kingdom who is supposed to be —nothing less but— the salt of the earth and the light of the world (cf. Mt 5:13-16), as of the applicability of the Beatitudes (cf. Mt 5:3-12).

With authority, Jesus changes the interpretation of the negative precept “Do not kill” (cf. Ex 20:13), by the positive meaning of the deep and radical demand of reconciliation, which, for additional emphasis, is put in relationship to the worship. Thus, no offering is valid when you “recall that your brother has anything against you” (Mt 5:23). This is why it is so important to settle any dispute as, otherwise, the invalidity of your offering will be turned against you (cf. Mt 5,26).

All this can only be attained through a great love. Indeed —St. Paul will say—: “The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not steal; you shall not covet,’ and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this saying, namely ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law” (Rm 13:9-10). Help us beg to be renewed in the gift of charity —to the minimum detail— towards our neighbor, and our life will be the best and most authentic of all our offers to God.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“What is so just and what so worthy as that the creature should imitate its Creator? He has determined the restoration and sanctification of believers by the forgiveness of sins, so that, the guilty might be returned to innocence and the end of wrongdoing might become the beginning of virtue.” (Saint Leo the Great)

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“We must learn how to do penance, to let ourselves be transformed; to reach out to the other and to let God give us the courage and strength for this renewal. Today, in this world of ours, we need to rediscover the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.” (Benedict XVI)

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“Jesus acknowledged the Ten Commandments, but he also showed the power of the Spirit at work in their letter. He preached a ‘righteousness [which] exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees’ (Mt 5:20) as well as that of the Gentiles. He unfolded all the demands of the Commandments (...)” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, N° 2054)