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 mere follower of the law can experience. Even without committing evil deeds, habit often hardens the desire to pursue holiness, conforming us to the routine of behaving well, and nothing more. Saint John Bosco used to say: "Good is the enemy of the best." This is where the Word of the Master reaches us, inviting us to do "greater" things (cf. Mt 5:20), which begin with a different attitude. Greater things that, paradoxically, pass for lesser, for the smallest. To become angry, to despise, and to deny one's brother are not appropriate for the disciple of the Kingdom, who has been called to be—nothing more and nothing less—than the salt of the earth and the light of the world (cf. Mt 5:13-16), based on the validity of the Beatitudes (cf. Mt 5:3-12).

Jesus, with authority, changes the interpretation of the negative precept “You shall not kill” (cf. Ex 20:13) to the positive interpretation of the profound and radical demand for reconciliation, placed—for greater emphasis—in relation to worship. Thus, no offering is of any use when you “recall that your brother has

anything against you" (Mt 5:23). Therefore, it is important to settle any dispute, because otherwise the invalidity of the offering will turn against you (cf. Mt 5:26).

All this can only be mobilized by great love. Saint Paul tells us: "The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,' and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this saying, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law." Let us ask to be renewed in the gift of love—down to the smallest detail—for our neighbors, and our lives will be the best and most authentic offering to God.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "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)

- "Peace is built in the heart and from the heart, by eliminating pride and vindictiveness and carefully choosing our words. For words too, not only weapons, can wound and even kill" (Leo XIV)

- "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, Nº 2054)