

HOMILY by Fr. Anthony Davis

“Are we ready to do this? Are we sure?”

February 16, 2020

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)

Sir 15:15-20; 1 Cor 2:6-10; Mt 5:17-37

Why do people tend to view the "law of God" negatively rather than positively? Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard once said: "Most people believe that the Christian Commandments are intentionally a little too severe, like setting a clock half an hour ahead to make sure of not being late in the morning."

Cable TV wizard, Ted Turner said that the Ten Commandments are out of date. I wonder which ones he would scrap. "Thou shalt not kill?" Absurd. Or "Thou shalt not steal?" Try stealing CNN's signal without paying for it. Probably he had in mind, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Turner has been wrong before. Thus the Ten Commandments will never be obsolete. For instance, "Adultery" is just as serious now as it was then. And neither God in the Old Testament, nor Jesus in the New "intentionally made His Commandments a little too severe."

Jesus knew that happiness comes from living according to God's laws. And so breaking those laws, or sinning, brings unhappiness and even death. That's why he stresses this fact as a big deal, that the life of integrity, or righteousness, is the life God intends for us to live. Put in another way, Jesus made it very clear that the essence of God's law - his commandments and way of life, must be fulfilled. Indeed, God's law is true and righteous because it flows from his love, goodness, and holiness. It is a law of grace, love, and freedom for us. That is why God commands us to love him above all else and to follow in the way of his Son, the Lord Jesus who taught us how to love, by laying down our lives for one another.

Summary: Hence the first reading, from Sirach, contains the clearest statement in the Old Testament concerning the God-given freedom of the human will and exonerating God from all responsibility for evil in the world. "If you choose, you can keep the commandments . . . before you are life and death, whichever you choose shall be given you."

Then in today's Gospel, while challenging his disciples to live a life of justice and righteousness which would exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus shows us how to go to the root of the commandments about murder, adultery, divorce, taking foolish oaths, retaliation and love of neighbor. Hence, for Jesus, justification or sanctification is a grace from God. Man's role is one of cooperating with that grace by being faithful to it. Jesus then outlines the new moral standards for his disciples.

Life message: Among all the lessons that Jesus is teaching us today, let me zero in on our need to forgive, forget and move toward reconciliation as soon as possible. By this, Jesus means respecting life in all its stages by honoring others in words and deeds. In other words, we have to control our anger because it is the rawest, strongest and most destructive of human emotions. So St. Paul also advises us: "Be angry (righteous anger) but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger." (Eph 4:26). When we keep anger in our spirit, we are inviting physical illnesses, like hypertension, and mental illnesses, like

depression. Let us relax and keep silence when we are angry, wait before acting on our anger, give it time to detoxify and cool off, pray for God's strength for self-control and give the Holy Spirit time and a chance to help us see the event through Jesus' eyes instead of through anger's eyes.

In short, Jesus teaches that long-lasting anger is bad, contemptuous speech or destroying someone's reputation is worse, and harming another physically is the worst. "...So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift", says Jesus.

Are we ready to do this? Are we sure?