

Matthew 5:38-48

Jesus said to his disciples: 'You have learnt how it was said: Eye for eye and tooth for tooth. But I say this to you: offer the wicked man no resistance. On the contrary, if anyone hits you on the right cheek, offer him the other as well; if a man takes you to law and would have your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone orders you to go one mile, go two miles with him. Give to anyone who asks, and if anyone wants to borrow, do not turn away.'

'You have learnt how it was said: You must love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say this to you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; in this way you will be sons of your Father in heaven, for he causes his sun to rise on bad men as well as good, and his rain to fall on honest and dishonest men alike. For if you love those who love you, what right have you to claim any credit? Even the tax collectors do as much, do they not? And if you save your greetings for your brothers, are you doing anything exceptional? Even the pagans do as much, do they not? You must therefore be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect.'

The Law of Talion ... 'eye for eye, tooth for tooth', was a principle developed in early Babylonian law and is found in parts of the bible and early Roman society. It stated that criminals should receive as punishment whatever they had inflicted upon their victims. For many, this makes good sense, even today. But Jesus's teaching is new and leads to the realm of his Father, into holiness: *'Never return violence for violence; Love your enemies, Pray for those who persecute you'*. This is the fulfillment of the Law handed down to Moses, the Law that reveals God to us. Love of neighbour (good and bad) and mercy shown in acts, should always be at the centre of our lives, because God, our Father is love and mercy.

Prayer After Communion

Grant, we pray, almighty God, that we may experience the effects of the salvation which is pledged to us by these mysteries.

7th Sunday in Ordinary Time
19th February 2023

'Be Perfect Just As Your Heavenly Father Is Perfect'



In today's Gospel we continue reading the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus, speaking with authority, has stated that he has not come to abolish the Law, but to complete it. The observance of God's Law should be deeply planted in our hearts, motivating our every thought and action.

In today's passage, we hear how we must live, so as to be God's children.

Opening Prayer

Grant, we pray, almighty God, that, always pondering spiritual things, we may carry out in both word and deed that which is pleasing to you.

Leviticus 19:1-2,17-18

The Lord spoke to Moses; he said: ‘Speak to the whole community of the sons of Israel and say to them: “Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy. “You must not bear hatred for your brother in your heart. You must openly tell him, your neighbour, of his offence; this way you will not take a sin upon yourself. You must not exact vengeance, nor must you bear a grudge against the children of your people. You must love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord.”’

The Book of Leviticus is found in the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) and it deals solely with the Commandments that Moses received on Mount Sinai (Exodus 20). These 10 Commandments were studied and analysed and thousands of rules and prescriptions, covering every aspect of life, were produced. Today’s passage comes from the final section of the book (chapters 17 - 26) and focuses on ‘Holy Living’. Basically it answers the question why we should observe the Commandments: We are called to be holy, as God himself is holy.

Psalm 102(103):1-4,8,10,12-13

*My soul, give thanks to the Lord all my being, bless his holy name.
My soul, give thanks to the Lord and never forget all his blessings.*

*It is he who forgives all your guilt, who heals every one of your ills,
who redeems your life from the grave, who crowns you with love and compassion.*

*The Lord is compassion and love, slow to anger and rich in mercy.
He does not treat us according to our sins nor repay us according to our faults.*

*As far as the east is from the west so far does he remove our sins.
As a father has compassion on his sons, the Lord has pity on those who fear him.*

1 Corinthians 3:16-23

Didn’t you realise that you were God’s temple and that the Spirit of God was living among you? If anybody should destroy the temple of God, God will destroy him, because the temple of God is sacred; and you are that temple.

Make no mistake about it: if any one of you thinks of himself as wise, in the ordinary sense of the word, then he must learn to be a fool before he really can be wise. Why? Because the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. As scripture says: The Lord knows wise men’s thoughts: he knows how useless they are; or again: God is not convinced by the arguments of the wise. So there is nothing to boast about in anything human: Paul, Apollos, Cephas, the world, life and death, the present and the future, are all your servants; but you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God.

In our Second Reading Paul exhorts the Christians of Corinth to work for God alone. He reminds them that the Church is God's temple; the Spirit of God lives among them. Christianity has no place for personality cults, or for feathering our own beds. Christ was made man to promote God's glory and Christians, servants of Christ, must do the same. Progress in the Christian life comes from God alone. Let us recognize and be open to the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in our Diocese and in the everyday of our Parish Community.

***Alleluia, alleluia! If anyone loves me he will keep my word,
and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him. Alleluia!***

Offertory Prayer

As we celebrate your mysteries, O Lord, with the observance that is your due, we humbly ask you, that what we offer to the honour of your majesty may profit us for salvation.