

2017

- This Gospel today is always a favorite for when people (at least Christians) try to claim: “Jesus got rid of the law of the Old Testament!”
- *“Jesus said: ‘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 smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place.’”* Doesn’t sound like being He got rid of it to me...or to the Church.
- We don’t follow the sacrificial rituals found in the Jewish Law because, as we read especially in the letter to the Hebrews, those rituals simply weakly foreshadowed the fulfilling and overarching and eternal sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross.
- But the moral law remains intact...and, in fact, expanded...as we see today when Jesus says things like: *“You have heard that it was said ‘this’, but I say to you, even the desire to do such a thing is to do it.”*
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- And it is the dwelling upon a desire which is sin, not fleeting desire flashing through our minds that we try to suppress...for in the cultivation of desire, we say: “I would if I could!”
- For instance, the sight of a beautiful woman or attractive man may naturally elicit desire, but actual sin comes in cultivating the desire—seeking out the image...lingering on a fantasy. We are rather to recognize each person as an image and child of God rather than toilet paper to be used and then discarded.
- Men tend to seek out porn more, and I tell them to remember Jesus’ admonition about lust being the same as adultery, and of St. Paul’s advice to treat older women as mothers, younger women as sisters (and, extending the logic to women and/or homosexuals, to treat older men as fathers, younger men as little brothers).
- How would you like it, I ask them, if someone leered over your sister or mother, brother or father?

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- How can that in any way, shape, matter or form, be something good or holy?
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- There's a tendency today (perhaps always has been) to default to the "I was just too tempted!" defense...implying that we are helpless in the face of sin. Or, the cop-out: "I'm only human!"
- Well...God gives us reason so that we may live by reason. The whine, frankly, of, "I'm only human" is typically employed to excuse oneself in indulging the animal level of base instinct and emotion.
- But it is reason which raises us above the base animalian and into the realm of the spiritual. It is evidence of what separates us from the mere corporeal into the image of God.
- So...we shouldn't snivel: "I'm only human!"...but rather declare with pride and strength: "I am human!...not limited to base desires, but with a spiritual soul given reason, will and strength to rise above towards the truly good—to that which is of God!"
- After all, the saints were human, just like us...but in that they found strength, knowing that they were called to elevation, not to degradation.
- As God tells Cain in Genesis: "...*sin is [lurking] at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.*" (Genesis 4:7 RSV)
- Too bad Cain didn't listen.
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- So...remembering these things, I'd like to "mix and match" from the readings today.
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 - *If you choose you can keep the commandments;
if you trust in God, you too shall live;
Before man are life and death, good and evil,
whichever he chooses shall be given him.*
 - *The eyes of God are on those who fear him;
he understands man's every deed.*

*No one does he command to act unjustly,
to none does he give license to sin.*

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- *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.*
- (a wonderful motivation to be a catechist, by the way)
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- *We speak a wisdom to those who are mature, not a wisdom of this age, Rather, we speak God's wisdom...*
- *which God predetermined before the ages for our glory,*
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- *Blessed are they whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD. Blessed are they who observe his decrees, who seek him with all their heart.*
- *[for] What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him," (1Co 2:9 RSV)*
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- Yes, it can be difficult; self-discipline always is...but it is always worth it. There is no greater king than one who masters himself.

- Yes, our discipleship may cost us human popularity and applause. But, surrounded by the great cloud of witnesses of the angels and the saints, do we prefer the approval of men...or of God?
- Will earthly tempters come to our defense on the day of our judgment? I can assure you: no; they will be concerned for their own souls and fate, and accuse us of tempting them.

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- The movie “The Kingdom of Heaven” has often-prevalent screenwriter disdain for the Church and Christianity in many ways, but one line spoken by the king in the movie speaks of a great truth:
 - *“A king may move a man...but that man can also move himself... Remember that howsoever you are played or by whom, your soul is in your keeping alone...When you stand before God, you cannot say, ‘But I was told by others to do thus,’ or that virtue was not convenient at the time. This will not suffice. Remember that.”*
 - We are responsible for our own souls; parents for the religious education of their children.
 - And yet God freely provides us with the grace to stay faithful to the Good—to stay faithful to Him.
 - As Paul assures us: *“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength...”* (1Cor 10:13 RSV)
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 - We are reminded in the book of Sirach: *“The number of a man's days is great if he reaches a hundred years. [Yet] Like a drop of water from the sea and a grain of sand so are a few years in the day of eternity. (Sir 18:9-10 RSV)*
 - Know that God is with you...be strengthened in the common struggles which assail us by the knowledge of God’s love and grace. Be brave and upright that God may love thee...
 - ...and know that, as God Himself assures us, to the victor goes the reward of everlasting life.

Reading 1

[Sir 15:15-20](#)

If you choose you can keep the commandments, they will save you;
if you trust in God, you too shall live;
he has set before you fire and water
to whichever you choose, stretch forth your hand.
Before man are life and death, good and evil,
whichever he chooses shall be given him.
Immense is the wisdom of the Lord;
he is mighty in power, and all-seeing.
The eyes of God are on those who fear him;
he understands man's every deed.
No one does he command to act unjustly,
to none does he give license to sin.

[Ps 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34](#)

Responsorial Psalm

R. (1b) Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Blessed are they whose way is blameless,
who walk in the law of the LORD.
Blessed are they who observe his decrees,
who seek him with all their heart.

R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

You have commanded that your precepts
be diligently kept.

Oh, that I might be firm in the ways
of keeping your statutes!

R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Be good to your servant, that I may live
and keep your words.

Open my eyes, that I may consider
the wonders of your law.

R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Instruct me, O LORD, in the way of your statutes,
that I may exactly observe them.

Give me discernment, that I may observe your law
and keep it with all my heart.

R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

[1 Cor 2:6-10](#)

Reading 2

Brothers and sisters:

We speak a wisdom to those who are mature,
not a wisdom of this age,
nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away.
Rather, we speak God's wisdom, mysterious, hidden,
which God predetermined before the ages for our glory,
and which none of the rulers of this age knew;
for, if they had known it,
they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.
But as it is written:
*What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard,
and what has not entered the human heart,
what God has prepared for those who love him,*
this God has revealed to us through the Spirit.

For the Spirit scrutinizes everything, even the depths of God.

[Mt 5:17-37 or 5:20-22a, 27-28, 33-34a, 37](#)

Gospel

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 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 brother
will be liable to judgment;
and whoever says to 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.
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.”

or

Jesus said to his disciples:

“I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses

that of the scribes and Pharisees,

you will not enter 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 brother

will be liable to judgment.

“You have heard that it was said, *You shall not commit adultery.*

But I say to you,

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