

February 12, 2023

Cycle A – 6th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Sirach 15:15-20

Psalm: 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34

1 Corinthians 2:6-10

Matthew 5:17-37

Notes from Bishop Peter

THEME: THE HOLY SPIRIT HELPS US UNDERSTAND
THE MIND OF GOD AND TO ACT ACCORDINGLY.

1. St. Paul continually emphasizes the importance of the Holy Spirit who alone knows the mind of God. The HS scrutinizes or searches the depths of God and communicates that to each of us as according to our capability to receive it. This is most evident through the Word of God, the Sacred Scriptures.
 - a. The Scriptures are like a road map and the Holy Spirit is the power in us to get to our destination. In other words, the Holy Spirit in us helps us see what the Scriptures tell us and apply that to our lives, even though doing so can hurt. “Is that what I am doing? I’d better shape up!”
2. Jesus, moved by the Holy Spirit, gives us one of the most important passages of the New Testament from the Sermon on the Mount. He takes the Second Great Commandment, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” and gives us teachings that unpack this commandment. So let’s examine each of these sections and try to put in a modern context what Jesus is saying.
3. To be angry with one’s brother = everyone. It is not the anger a person feels when the Patriots lost or when a teenager comes home beyond curfew.
 - a. It’s the anger that one broods over that moves him or her to do harm to another. Example: Herodias who had John the Baptist beheaded... Henry VIII and St. Thomas More.
 - Includes vengeance: “Vengeance is mine, says the Lord.” (Rom. 12)
 - b. Raca – To treat a person or persons with CONTEMPT. To bully someone – to put another down (parents, teachers and coaches beware) – Anti-Semitism (looking down on Jews to the point of persecuting them) or belittling Muslims, Blacks, Asians, Hispanics...

- Christian attitude: “We are all made in the image and likeness of God,” and “Do to others what you would have them do to you.”
4. You fool – in a moral sense - to attempt to ruin a person’s reputation by branding him or her as immoral. Calumny! For example, certain individuals who falsely accused priests of sexually abusing them, destroying their reputation. Everyone has a sacred right to his or her reputation.
 5. Bringing one’s gift to the altar: In Jesus’ time the most holy day of Yom Kippur, meaning the day of atonement (= at-one-ment/ included the demand that persons reconciled with their neighbors.) Jesus shows just how important reconciliation is – without it, our assistance at Mass will not produce its full effect in our lives.
 - This shows the great importance of reconciling with those we have hurt and even taking the first step towards those who have hurt us. For example, Pope Saint John Paul II who met with Ali Acga, the Turkish hit man who tried to assassinate him to forgive and reconcile with him.
 6. “Everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her.” Works both ways, for men and women.
 - a. Sin begins in the mind. Pornography leads persons to commit adultery in their imaginations – those on their screens are real persons. Be careful of occasions of sin. Thus avoid connections to the Internet that feature porn.
 7. Divorce his wife: The wife in the Greek speaking world was the mother of the man’s children. She stayed home while he felt free to have sex with anyone he wanted, male or female.
 - a. To divorce one’s wife was too easy – this left her with her children to fend for herself with no support from him. Thus she often became poor and defenseless. Here, Jesus takes the side of the poor and vulnerable.
 - b. As Christianity penetrated the Greek speaking world, monogamous marriages became a stumbling block but the church never backed down.
 - c. The exception – “unless the marriage is unlawful” = with close relatives, sister, first cousin aunt, etc. (Leviticus 18)

8. Oaths: Like the one taken by people called on to testify at a trial. Jesus says that, in an ideal world, one's moral character should be so strong that everyone knows he or she will tell the truth. Unfortunately, in the real world there are many who lie and therefore must be made to swear an oath that what they are saying is "the truth and the whole truth, so help us God." Perjury, lying under oath, is a serious offense against God and the state.
9. Eucharist: It is Jesus who calls us to be his true disciples and sends us his Holy Spirit who empowers us to become exactly that.

Amen.