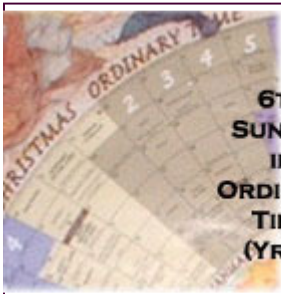


Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time



Matthew 5:17-37

17 Jesus said to his disciples: 'Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them. 18 I tell you solemnly, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, not one little stroke, shall disappear from the Law until its purpose is achieved. 19 Therefore, the man who infringes even one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same

will be considered the least in the kingdom of heaven; but the man who keeps them and teaches them will be considered great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 'For I tell you, if your virtue goes no deeper than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven. 21 'You have learnt how it was said to our ancestors: You must not kill; and if anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court. 22 But I say this to you: anyone who is angry with his brother will answer for it before the court; if a man calls his brother "Fool" he will answer for it before the Sanhedrin; and if a man calls him "Renegade" he will answer for it in hell fire.'

Other readings: Ecclesiasticus 15:15-20 Psalm 118 (119) 1 Corinthians 2:6-10

We continue reading from the first great speech of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, the Sermon on the Mount. Today's reading is very long, so that only the first few verses are given here. You are invited to read the rest in your Bible. Jesus teaches that the 'Law and the Prophets', by which he means the scriptural tradition of Jewish faith, are to be cherished. Nevertheless, these traditions are to be 'completed' or 'fulfilled'. The fulfilment brought by Jesus can be new and unexpected. Having challenged the inadequate 'virtue' or 'righteousness' of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus presents a new way. He gives six examples of how his teaching deepens the traditional teaching of the Jews. These pieces of teaching are sometimes described as 'antitheses'. In them Jesus quotes the Jewish tradition and goes on to challenge it with the words 'But I say this to you!' The first challenge makes more radical the commandment 'You must not kill'. For those called by Christ there are deeper demands. To hurl anger and insults at another is not the behaviour of a Christian. In the following verses Jesus will offer radical new understandings of other tenets of the Law. To hate one's enemy may have been considered acceptable in the tradition, but in verse 44 Jesus says: 'But I say this to you: Love your enemies!'

Am I ready to learn new things from the teaching of Jesus?

Do I cherish the teaching of the Law and the Prophets which prepared the way for Christ?

We pray for readiness to learn from the Scriptures and from the teaching of the Church.

We pray for a new attitude to those who have offended us.