

Christians' Code of Ethics and Standard of Conduct

Lectio Divina of Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time A

Opening prayer: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Heavenly Father, Teach us the way of your decrees, that we may follow it to the end. Give us understanding, so that we may keep your law and obey it with all our heart. Direct us in the path of your commands. Turn our heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain. Turn our eyes away from worthless things; preserve our life according to your word. Your laws are good. How we long for your precepts! In your righteousness preserve our life."

First reading: A reading from the book of Sirach 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. (The word of the Lord/ Thanks be to God)

Commentary: Life is full of choices. We make choices and we are responsible for whatever choice that we make. We cannot blame anyone for our choices. The Lord does not command us to be wicked nor he permits anyone to sin. It is we who are responsible for any right or wrong choice. The Lord tells us to make right choices in life and for life. There is really only one choice to be made, and it is the choice between life and death. Although we make lots of other choices but in the end the only choice that really matters for us is the one between life and death. It is both the ultimate choice and the ultimate criteria for making all other choices.

Responsorial Psalm 119

R. 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!

Second Reading: A reading from the first letter of St. Paul to Corinthians 2:6-10

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. (The word of the Lord/ Thanks be to God)

Commentary: St. Paul contrasts the wisdom of the prevailing Greek culture with the wisdom of God. He advises Christians to seek true wisdom in God's revelation instead of indulging in endless discussions of Greek philosophy. God in His wisdom has saved us through Jesus. St. Paul challenges his Corinthian believers to appreciate the wisdom of God's saving plan for His people, a plan hidden for ages but now revealed by the Spirit

Gospel Reading: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew 5:17-37

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 his brother will be liable to judgment; and whoever says to his 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." (The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ/praise to you Lord Jesus Christ)

Meditation: During Jesus' time, religious leaders had turned the laws into a confusing mass of rules. When Jesus talked about a new way to understand God's law, he was actually trying to bring people back to its original purpose. He did not speak against the law itself but against the abuses of the law. Jesus did not come to destroy the Law but to fulfill the Law. Until John the Baptist, The Law and the prophets were relevant but in Jesus, they were fulfilled. Jesus did not come to this earth as an opponent to the law. He came to fulfill it. How? He revered it, loved it, obeyed it, and brought it to fruition. He fulfilled the law's prophetic utterances regarding Himself (Luke 24:44). Jesus fulfilled the law. John 1:17 says, "while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ"

The Pharisees were scrupulous in following the OT laws outwardly and forcing the people to follow the same without allowing God to change their hearts. They looked pious but they were far from the kingdom of God. Whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, '*Raqa,*' will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna. Anger is a terrible sin because it violates God's commandment to love. Anger can brood bitterness against someone. It is a dangerous emotion, leading to violence and

emotional hurt and increased mental stress and spiritual damage. What is *Raqa*? The word *raqa* generally is thought to be of Hebrew origin meaning “empty.” It is understood by the scholars that this word is an insult telling someone that he/she is empty-headed or foolish. Jesus makes it clear that if someone uses this word *Raqa*, he is answerable to the Sanhedrin because of the violation of this law. Calling someone food is an insult and it is a violation of the law leading to Gehenna or hell.

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. The word Gehenna is the Greek word, meaning “Valley, south of Jerusalem was where some of the ancient Israelites “passed children through the fire” (sacrificed their children) to the Canaanite god Molech (2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6; Jeremiah 7:31; 19:2–6). Gehenna continued to be an unclean place used for burning trash from the city of Jerusalem. Jesus used Gehenna as an illustration of hell: a place of eternal torment and constant uncleanness, where the fires never ceased burning and the worms never stopped crawling (Matthew 10:28; Mark 9:47–48).

“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”. Broken relationships can hinder our relationship with God. If we have a problem or grievance with a friend, we should resolve the problem as soon as possible. We are hypocrites if we claim to love God while we hate others. The Old Testament Law said that it is wrong for a person to have sex with someone other than his or her spouse but Jesus says that the desire to have a sex with someone other than one’s spouse is mental adultery and thus sin. Jesus emphasizes that if the act is wrong then so the intention.

Today’s gospel from the sermon on the Mount is the code of ethics and standard of conduct for all believers. They are eternal values and not temporary. They stress discipleship and not piety. The heart of Jesus’ message is that we can live a very happy life if we follow the teaching of Jesus.

Concluding prayer: Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life