

Homily of Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year A, 2026

Sirach 15:15-20; Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34; 1 Corinthians 2:6-10; Matthew 5:17-37

We read in the first reading, “[God] 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.” All our choices and actions have their responsibilities and consequences. Bad choices and actions have bad responsibilities and consequences, while good choices and actions have good responsibilities and consequences. This is in line with the natural law of cause and effect. Moses says, “I call heaven and earth today to witness against you: I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving the Lord, your God, obeying his voice, and holding fast to him. For that will mean life for you...” (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

In the second reading, St. Paul reminds us that human wisdom is not enough in our choices and decisions. We need God’s wisdom which is given to us by the Holy Spirit. Wisdom is the first of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord). The Holy Spirit who “scrutinizes everything, even the depths of God” calls us to a deeper and intimate relationship with God which human wisdom cannot provide.

We pray for the wisdom of God to guide us, so that our choices and decisions are for our good and for God’s glory. However, we need to acknowledge that there are times we are not free to make choices and decisions by ourselves or for ourselves. Nature sometimes chooses or decides for us. Men and women sometimes choose or decide for us. God sometimes chooses or decides for us. During such moments, we rely on God’s divine providence and on the fortitude of the Holy Spirit to hold out. During such moments, the Prayer of Serenity become very meaningful: “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.”

Religious leaders would have accused Jesus of undermining the law and the prophets with his teachings and actions, which is why, in today’s gospel, Jesus tells them that he came not to abolish the law or the prophets but to fulfill their true purpose. In his Sermon on the Mount (today’s gospel is its continuation), he shocked the religious leaders by asserting to have a higher authority than Moses (who gave them the law he received from God). They were shocked by the divine mandate with which Jesus contrasts four areas of the law contained the Books of Moses (The Torah):

“You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, ...” “But I say to you, ...”

“You have heard that it was said, ...” “But I say to you, ...”

“It was also said, ...” “But I say to you, ...”

“Again you have heard that it was said to your ancestors, ...” “But I say to you, ...”

In the four areas of the law, Jesus points out some aspects of human relationship which the people then and we now neglect very often:

- 1) One may not have committed murder, but how about prolonged anger, hate, humiliation, unforgiveness, and lack of reconciliation?
- 2) One may not have committed adultery, but how about lust, self-abuse, pornography, and other obscenities?
- 3) On the area of divorce, it was a patriarchal society at that time. Rights and privileges of women were grossly suppressed. Women were very vulnerable. In our own time, do we make efforts to see that the vulnerable receive justice and protected from the clutches of aggressors? Do we make effort to see that the rights and privileges of the weak and the voiceless are not denied them?
- 4) At that time, swearing oaths by dishonest people to bypass the process of finding out the truth was rampant. Dishonest people swear manipulative oaths to cover up lies and at times claim ownership of what did not belong to them. Jesus' directive, "But I say to you, do not swear at all; ..." is not interpreted as an elimination formal, legal, or solemn oaths. Rather, Jesus challenges us to live lives of honesty and integrity. Which is why he says, "Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.' Anything more is from the evil one." "Do not swear at all" is not taken literally but understood to maintain absolute honesty and integrity. Jesus warns us against manipulating truth and justice, which comes from the evil one.

May God's wisdom, given to us by the Holy Spirit, guide us to make right choices and decisions, and live lives of justice, fairness, honesty and integrity. Amen.

Fr. Martin Eke, MSP