

16. February 2020

“Faithful to the tradition”

Mt 5, 17-37

In that time Jesus said, 'Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them. In truth I tell you, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, not one little stroke, is to disappear from the Law until all its purpose is achieved. Therefore, anyone 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 person who keeps them and teaches them will be considered great in the kingdom of Heaven. For I tell you, if your uprightness does not surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of Heaven. You have heard how it was said to our ancestors, you shall not kill; and if anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court. But I say this to you, anyone who is angry with a brother will answer for it before the court; anyone who calls a brother "Fool" will answer for it before the Sanhedrin; and anyone who calls him "Traitor" will answer for it in hell fire. So then, if you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering. Come to terms with your opponent in good time while you are still on the way to the court with him, or he may hand you over to the judge and the judge to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison. In truth I tell you, you will not get out till you have paid the last penny. You have heard how it was said, you shall not commit adultery. But I say this to you, if a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye should be your downfall, tear it out and throw it away; for it will do you less harm to lose one part of yourself than to have your whole body thrown into hell. And if your right hand should be your downfall, cut it off and throw it away; for it will do you less harm to lose one part of yourself than to have your whole body go to hell. It has also been said, anyone who divorces his wife must give her a writ of dismissal. But I say this to you, everyone who divorces his wife, except for the case of an illicit marriage, makes her an adulteress; and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery. Again, you have heard how it was said to our ancestors, You must not break your oath, but must fulfil your oaths to the Lord. But I say this to you, do not swear at all, either by heaven, since that is God's throne; or by earth, since that is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, since that is the city of the great King. Do not swear

by your own head either, since you cannot turn a single hair white or black. All you need say is "Yes" if you mean yes, "No" if you mean no; anything more than this comes from the Evil One.

The great theme that the first part of this passage presents to us is fidelity to the divine commandments that we have received. Jesus does not come to abolish the commandments of God, but to fulfill them. He helps us to understand them better in their spiritual content. For example, he tells us that not only must we be held accountable before the court for killing, but even earlier, for having stripped our brother of his honor, for having offended or insulted him. In a certain sense this also means killing him, and is shameful in the eyes of God! If the Lord calls us even to pray for our enemies (*cf. Mt 5,44*), how much more does it hurt love when we insult our brother.

God's tender love must become a reality among us, human beings. But since we do not yet fully understand this love, the Lord explains it to us again and again; and, moreover, he pours it into our hearts through his Spirit (*cf. Rom 5,5*).

The next example also speaks of the way in which God wants us to deal with each other. Before going to Him, we should clear up our differences with our brother, settle the matter with him, so that nothing stands between God and us! For only a reconciled heart can properly receive God's love, because it does not close itself off; and even with the opponent we must make peace!

In this text the more exact determination of the commandments becomes very clear. Jesus clearly shows that marriage - as the Church teaches - is indissoluble. This is a truth that is less and less understood and practiced in today's society. This high dignity of marriage is linked to the uniqueness of the union between man and woman, which embraces body, soul and spirit. From this grows a unity that is destined for the whole of life, also to guarantee the security of children.

Then the Lord makes it clear to us that swearing is not necessary, because God simply wants a clear YES or a clear NO from us. This "yes" or "no" should permeate our whole life, for it has something to do with the honesty and clarity that God wants from us. Of course we should keep what we have promised, but we do not need to swear to it. Our whole life must stand behind our statement; we cannot leave the doors open when it is time to make decisions. It is better to make a mistake once and correct it, than to never be able to come to a decision!

We see, then, that in Jesus the Revelation to the People of Israel continues; or, rather, all Revelation before His coming flows into Him and finds its fullness in Him. In His discipleship we learn to become what we are. It is His love that makes us become that. Truth and love enter into an indissoluble covenant, into which we are taken. In other words, Jesus, who as the Son of God is the truth in person, takes us into the mystery of God's love. In Him we find our home and our search becomes different. If we previously searched for God, now it is our task to put into practice the love we have found, both in our intimate relationship with God and in our relationship with people.