

## **Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time: Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!**

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

How blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

The law of love sums up all laws and perfects them. Our Lord Jesus fulfilled all of God's laws when he sacrificed his life on the cross for the love of God and the human race, for each one of us, to save us! This love is inscribed in our hearts, and the law of the Lord protects and leads this love to perfection.

God's love is made practical through his commandments given to us to guide and put us in order and save us from harming ourselves, others, and the world. Those who obey the law choose to live, and those who don't choose death. "Before men are life and death; whichever he chooses will be given him" (Sir 15:17).

How are we following the law of the Lord in our lives? Let us consider reflecting on the following three points:

**Go beyond mere external observance of the laws.** It means that not only crimes of violence like murder are forbidden but also harboring any anger, which is the root cause of murder; that is, we can blow others away by rejecting them or stabbing others in the back. It is not only the act of adultery that must be shunned but even lustful thoughts, which are the seeds from which plants of adultery grow; that is, our hearts can be filled with lust, treating others as objects of pleasure. It is not only false oaths that must be avoided but also any dishonest motive behind words; our hearts can be filled with malicious intent. Our Lord Jesus wants us to have a clean record on the outside and a clean heart on the inside. And so we heard our Lord saying to his followers: "...unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you cannot enter the Kingdom of God" (Matt 5:20).

**Surpass the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.** The Pharisees and Scribes followed the law and did what they were supposed to do. They paid their debts, observed their religious rituals, and were leaders in their communities; some were outstanding and well-respected. But often, Jesus reprimands them to go beyond mere external observance of the laws. Visible goodness is not necessarily mean good on the inside. If a person merely emphasizes the exterior or the letter of the law, one will, later on, ask: "What is the minimum requirement of the law?" Which eventually look for exemptions or find ways to go around it. We are encouraged to go back to the roots underlying God's commandments which are love for God and love for our neighbor; then and only do we find ourselves asking: "What more can I do?"

**Be holy as your heavenly Father.** Is it possible to become as holy as God is? Many would probably place such holiness in the realm of fantasy. Yet, it is better to strive for this ideal and fall short than never have tried at all; besides, we are not left to struggle towards holiness and perfection all by ourselves. Through Jesus Christ, we have received "God's wisdom, a mysterious, hidden wisdom, which eye has not seen, ear has not heard, but planned by God before all ages for our glory" (1Cor 2:7). God's grace in Jesus is greater than our sins, and we are to humble ourselves and beg for it. Yes, we may sin again and again, but we shall rise again and again. It is an ongoing reality in our lives, and we pray never to give up or get tired to grow in holiness.

We all know we cannot suddenly become as holy and loving as God is. We are pilgrims after holiness and genuine love moving little by little towards them; as the words of Dante, a philosopher, and poet of the Middle Ages, would put it: "A mighty flame follows a tiny spark." We become holy and loving through the grace of God, not instantly but little by little, like the way of our patron St. Therese of the Child Jesus. If we do little things more consistently and with great love, we shall enter into that mighty flame of God's holiness. Little by little, inch by inch, doing it daily and deliberately.

God bless you!

Fr. Manny Hewe, Pastor