

Keep Your Words Short and Sweet

Daily Gospel / Liturgical Cycle C

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Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Matthew 5:20-26.

Jesus said to his disciples: "I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into 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 with him. 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."

Matthew 5:20-26.

Introductory Prayer

Father of love, source of all blessings, you have led me throughout my life, and you lead me still. Thank you for your paternal care. Jesus, Son of God, you died for me on the cross to pay for my sins and manifest your unconditional love for me. Thank you for showing me the way home to the Father. Holy Spirit, sweet guest of the soul, you heal me and strengthen me and set me on fire from the most intimate depths of my soul. Thank you for your loving presence within me.

Petition:

Jesus meek and humble of heart, make my heart more like yours.

1. Anger in Our Hearts:

Jesus is speaking here in particular about anger, that is, a desire for revenge or an attitude that simply refuses to forgive. Jesus always brings us back to the human heart. Actions flow from decisions made in the heart, even if not immediately evident. When we cultivate a sentiment in our heart – be it good or evil - it will eventually find ways of coming to fruition. "If you are angry do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger or you will give the devil a chance" (Ephesians 4:26). Any unwillingness to forgive leads to resentment in the heart and ultimately destroys lives and relationships. "What does it mean to forgive, if not to appeal to a good that is greater than any evil?" (Pope John Paul II, Memory and Identity, p. 15).

2. Insults Are Grave Matters:

"Sticks and stones may break my bones..." Each one of us knows firsthand the penetrating power of words. With them one may edify or destroy, enhance or tarnish, heal or wound. It is rather striking that Jesus refers to insults towards "a brother or sister:" in other words, insulting those closest to us, especially those closest to our heart. It is no revelation that those we love the most are also the ones most capable of wounding us deeply, and vice versa. What dagger could ever penetrate more than an unkind word from a loved one? The true revelation is that God takes each word we speak seriously. In fact, he will hold us accountable for them because the words are an outward manifestation of what we have in our hearts. The power of words reveals the weight of words.

3. Hold No Grudges:

"If you remember that your brother or sister has something against you..." This phrase makes us shift a little in our seats. Jesus gives us a tremendous view into God's heart. God's very essence is a unity of love – three persons, one nature. We are made in God's image, and we are made to live forever in union with God. But so too are my brothers and sisters. If we have done anything to wound the union of love with those around us, then we must repair the breach. In fact, it is so important to God (and so important for us) that God will not accept our "offering" if we have consciously wounded the unity with those around us. Bring those particularly difficult relationships to prayer, and draw the strength from God to love as we should. He will not ask for some virtue and then refuse his grace.

Conversation with Christ:

Lord, teach me to love and help me to be a saint. You have created me and called me to the Catholic faith. Help me to live that faith generously, living the primacy of love in my daily life. Mother Most Pure, make my heart only for Jesus.

Resolution:

Today I will do three hidden acts of charity.