

# Yes or No

Daily Gospel / Liturgical Cycle A

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Matthew 5:33-37

Jesus said to his disciples: "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."

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: Lord, help me to be honest and sincere in my dealings with others.

1. So Help Me, God! An oath is a solemn invocation of God to witness the truth of what one asserts to be the case or the sincerity of one's undertakings in regard to future actions. Most Christians have acknowledged the importance and appropriateness of oath-taking on occasions of great importance. We see the President take an oath of office; we see men and women of the military swear an oath to faithfully serve and defend our country; we see people who take the stand in a courtroom place their hand on the Bible, raise their right hand, and take an oath that they will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth ... and they end by saying, "So help me, God." All of the above are calling on God to help them be true to their word because what they are swearing to do is a humanly difficult task, one which needs divine assistance in order to remain true.

2. Base Your Mutual Relationships on Truth: In Christ's time, the making of sworn statements was so frequent and the casuistry surrounding them so intricate that the practice was being grossly abused. All this meant great disrespect for the name of God. Jesus lays down here the criterion that his disciples must apply in their lives. It is based on re-establishing mutual trust, nobility and sincerity. The devil is "the father of lies" (John 8:44). Therefore, Christ's Church must teach that human relationships cannot be based on deceit and insincerity. God is truth, and the children of the Kingdom must, therefore, base mutual relationships on truth. Jesus consistently condemned hypocrisy in his teachings, and he praised sincerity as one of the finest of virtues: "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" (spoken of Nathanael, John 1:47). Do I eschew any form of hypocrisy in my life?

3. Anything More Is from the Evil One: Would it be reading too much into the words of Our Lord — to say simply "yes" if we mean yes, and "no" if we mean no — to apply them to the origins and intentions of lying in our lives? Jesus affirms that anything obscuring what we ought to say, or anything meant to mislead, cover up or falsify by false emphasis, "comes from the Evil One". He shows us that insincerity is how political and economic life become and remain alienated from truth, become destructive of the kingdom of God, of the kingdom of him who was, and remains, "a sign that is spoken against" (Luke 2:34). Am I honest with my family members and work colleagues?

Conversation with Christ: You see it all, Lord, and you read my heart. You look on in sorrow as I allow myself to play by the rules of the Evil One. Help me to re-commit myself to living in the light, doing away with all falsehood. From now on, my "yes" will be yes, and my "no" will be no.

Resolution: I will start today by seeking to patch up any relationship — especially my relationship with my spouse — which may have been harmed through a lack of truthfulness and sincerity.