

A 6th Sunday 2014 Delanson

♪ Eye has not seen, ear has not heard

what God has ready for those who love him;

Spirit of love, come give us the mind of Jesus, teach us the wisdom of God. ♪

To really live the Gospel Jesus taught, we need the wisdom of God,. I believe that this wisdom is revealed in the prayer written by Reinhold Neibuhr and used by AA and other 12 step groups throughout the world. Most of us know the first part of that prayer:

*God, Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference.*

But there is more to that prayer - and I have adapted it as part of the prayer I pray every morning. It goes like this:

Living one day at a time,

Enjoying one moment at a time;

Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace.

Taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it;

Trusting that You will make all things right if I surrender to Your will;

That I may be reasonably happy in this life,

And supremely happy with You in the eternal NOW of the Resurrection.

To live that wisdom in our day to day choices, we need to have the mind of Jesus.

In today's Gospel, and in all his teaching, Jesus does not speak in either/or language, his teaching is always "*both/and.*"

I often mute the commercials on TV, but I like the one that says, "what if the menu at a restaurant was sweet OR sour; and what if we had nuts OR bolts?" If you've seen the commercial, you know that disaster follows. Then the punch line is, "I like AND better." I'm not even sure what the commercial is advertising, but that is a wonderful image of the teaching of Jesus and the heart of Catholic theology.

Jesus teaches something new - but he builds on the things he learned as a child.

Several times in the Gospel today we hear him say, "You have heard the commandment... but I say to you!"

The 10 commandments are a description of how a good Jew, or even a good human being is called to behave. Jesus does not say we have choose between these commandments or his teaching, he goes deeper - even deeper than the way of life he learned from his parents and his religion. His new law is less about specific actions and rules, and more about relationships with God and each other.

He says clearly, "I have not come to weaken or abolish the law, I have come to fulfill it." It's really about a whole new way of looking at law.

The mind of Jesus is not a new set of rules but a love that gives the law new meaning, new direction, new motivation. Jesus replaces the rules of a courtroom with the love of a father or mother. The New Law consists of both the life and teaching of Jesus.

Today we hear the teaching of Jesus in the Gospel I read, and we will see his way of living revealed in the whole Eucharistic Prayer, especially the beginning of that prayer - the "Preface of Jesus the Compassion of God" - when we will hear these words *"He was moved with compassion for the poor and the powerless, for the sick and the sinner; he made himself a neighbor to the oppressed."* We are called by our baptism to walk that path.

The Gospel is a call to choose life, love & truth. It is a call to go beyond law to a life of love. The Gospel is a call to live out of the serenity prayer. It is a call to trust Jesus in every circumstance - whether it is the loss of a job, the death of someone we love, the end of a relationship or the destruction of a house by fire or flood.

I can tell you that when Irene washed through the house in Middleburgh that was our ministry center & my residence, Sr. Anna and I thought that Bethany Ministries was over. But we chose to trust Jesus, and listen to where he was calling us to go.

The people of the county and the Diocese as well as the Knights of Columbus of Our Lady of Fatima parish became instruments of God's peace and help, and our ministry was re-born in a whole new form. We have not abandoned our preaching on the road, but our work is much more a "ministry of presence" to the people where we live.

Just recently, 15 of the people we had chosen to be present to, were present to us to get a sofa-bed from Sr. Anna's apartment to the Menzies family [who had suffered the loss of their home by fire].

A week later, 13 people helped to move me in to the first permanent residence I have lived in since 2011 - after 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ years of "camping" in 3 temporary places. In a way, Irene was a new baptism for Bethany Ministries.

In the spirit of the serenity prayer, we chose to trust that God will make all things right, we chose to accept hardship as a pathway to peace and we chose to accept this world as it is, rather than the way we would have it.

Jesus can give us the grace to accept what we cannot change, the courage and energy to change the things we can and the wisdom to know the difference.

The kind of love Jesus gives is the love that overflows our capacity and can only be received from God. This is the love he offers today - if you and I are willing to admit our need. This is the love we celebrate at Mass.

Are you and I ready to follow in his steps? This is the love we are sent to share. If we do, the law will be fulfilled in us because the Spirit will show us what to choose and empower us to do it. As one of the new dismissal prayers says, we will be sent on mission to *"Go in peace to glorify the Lord with your life!"*

Readings:

1st Reading – Sirach 15:15-20 [If you trust in God, you too shall live]

Responsorial Psalm – Psalm 119 "Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord."

2nd Reading – 1 Corinthians 2:6-10 [Eye has not seen, nor has ear heard ..what God has prepared for those who love him]

Gospel - Matthew 5:17-37 [a longer form of the short version given in the Lectionary]

Jesus gathered his disciples around him on the mountain and he taught them, saying:

"Do not think I have come to weaken the law or the prophets, I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.

For I tell you, unless your holiness surpasses that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of God.

"You have heard the commandment imposed on your ancestors,

'You shall not commit murder; every murderer will be liable to judgment.'

But I say to you, whoever is angry with their brother or sister, will be liable to judgment; and if you use abusive language against your sister or brother you will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and if you hold them in contempt you risk the fires of Gehenna.

If you bring your gift to the altar and there recall that your brother or sister has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your sister or brother, and then come and offer your gift.

You have heard the commandment, 'you shall not commit adultery.'

But I say to you, when you look at another with lust, you have already committed adultery in your thoughts.

"You have heard the commandment imposed on your ancestors,

'Do not take a false oath; rather, make good to the Lord all your pledges.' What I tell you is this: do not swear at all. Say 'Yes' when you mean 'Yes' and 'No' when you mean 'No'. Anything beyond that is from the evil one."

The Gospel of the Lord