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Friday's Gospel: Entering into the Lives of Others

Gospel for Friday in the 1st
Week of Lent, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 5:20-26*)

For I tell you, unless your
righteousness exceeds that of the
scribes and Pharisees, you will never
enter the kingdom of heaven.

You have heard that it was said to the
men of old, 'You shall not kill; and
whoever kills shall be liable to
judgment.' But I say to you that
everyone who is angry with his
brother shall be liable to judgment;

whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be liable to the hell of fire. So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Make friends quickly with your accuser, while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison; truly, I say to you, you will never get out till you have paid the last penny.

Commentary

Jesus has not come to abolish the law, but to bring it to fulfilment. With

Him and in Him, the life of a Christian is no longer merely a life filled with obligations, duties and practices, but a life of self-giving and happiness.

And thus the precept "do not kill" is enriched. Being filled with anger entails being subject to judgment, which was the tribunal faced by those who committed murder. The one who insults his brother will face the Sanhedrin. Speaking badly of someone leads to the fire of hell. Having something against a brother means being out of communion with God.

Christ would have caused astonishment by speaking in this way. But he does so to stress the root of the problem, what is truly at stake: communion with God passes through communion with men.

"Do not kill" prohibits more than harming the other person physically.

It prohibits refusing to seek communion with the other person, to truly enter into their life and carry the life of the other person on one's own shoulders.

There is no middle way. Either the life of the other person is loved radically or it is annihilated. Either I enjoy the presence and life of the other person, or I reject it, eliminate it, get it out of the way.

That is the life that Christ offers us, a life of fullness: truly entering into the lives of others. Enjoying their successes, their talents and abilities, their joys, their projects; walking with them in their failures, in their sorrows, in their pain. Embracing them, forgiving them and accepting their forgiveness.

A new way of living that transcends our own capabilities.

Luis Cruz

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