

Friday's Gospel: A Heart Free to Love

Gospel for Friday in the 10th Week of Ordinary Time, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 5:27-32*)

Jesus said to his disciples: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand

causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

Commentary

This Gospel passage is part of the Sermon on the Mount, the first of the great discourses in which Saint Matthew brings together our Lord’s teachings about the Kingdom of God. Jesus begins by listing the Beatitudes, which depict for us his face and show us his charity. He teaches us

how to attain the fullness of the Law, inviting us to go one step further, to live the Christian life not as commandments to fulfill but as attitudes to achieve. Blessed means happy. The Beatitudes are our path to happiness.

This is the context that helps us understand today's Gospel. Jesus is speaking about specific ways to attain the fullness of the Law. Referring to the precept forbidding adultery (cf. *Ex* 20:14; *Deut* 5:18), he calls for the exquisite respect for others that the Law entails. He insists that the sin of adultery can also be committed internally in one's heart (v. 28). This teaching is a call to give one's whole heart. To be blessed, to achieve true happiness, we need to have a chaste heart, a heart in love where there is no room for the selfishness of impure thoughts.

Jesus also talks about the ancient custom of putting away one's wife. The Mosaic legislation introduced the possibility of a "certificate of divorce": that is, an act signed by the husband that allowed the woman to be received by another man. However, to underline the greatness and dignity of the marital bond with a woman, Jesus rejects this and says it makes the woman "an adulterous."

Our Lord invites us to always be aware of our own inner attitudes. Sin is not only an external action, but an internal one in our heart. Sin harms us because it distances us from God and our neighbor. By overcoming temptations in our heart we become freer and make space for God and for others. We are more capable of loving.

Jesus asks us to always look at the inner root of our sins. Let us ask Him for a heart always ready to love God

and our neighbor, free from the bonds of sin.

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