

BRINGING HOME THE GOSPEL

February 16, 2020 • 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time • Matthew 5:17-37

Beyond the Law

Jesus begins by telling us he has not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it. The Ten Commandments are still the backbone of our faith. Indeed “...whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” But in this Gospel, Jesus begins to put some flesh on those bones. It is not enough to follow the letter of the Law. Jesus’ followers are called to do more.

In the first part of this reading Jesus seems to offer parents a freeway to the kingdom. It would seem the kingdom is ours if we live by the Ten Commandments and teach our children to do the same. However, as the reading goes on, Jesus tells us that his followers are challenged to do even more.

To be Jesus’ followers, we are to live beyond the letter of the law. For example, it is not enough to say we won’t hurt anyone physically (the fifth commandment). Jesus tells us we are not to hurt anyone emotionally either. We must curb our anger. We shouldn’t insult others, and we certainly don’t call them names. Finally, if we have hurt someone, we offer a sincere apology and try to make amends.

This is definitely a lesson we teach our children by example. All parents lose their tempers occasionally. Regrettably, when I was raising my children, it was more than occasionally. Fortunately, I learned the importance of saying I was sorry once things had calmed down; and to say it with more than words. I would try to take their hand or sit close to them making sure to look them in the eyes. I would tell them I was wrong, not in the dispute perhaps, but in the way I’d handled it.

As time went on, I learned that by making myself admit I was wrong (something not easy for me to do) I became more aware of what triggered my

temper. I learned to walk out of the room before exploding. And because I was modeling the behavior, it was easier for me to make sure my children did the same. Teaching children to admit they are wrong and say they are sorry to a sibling certainly bring us, and them, a little closer to the kingdom.

FAMILY RESPONSE

Ask each person to talk about the things that make them angry. Talk about how they feel when someone tells them they are sorry. Ask younger children to show you their happy faces and then their angry faces.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

If losing your temper is a problem, try to figure out the root cause of your anger. There are usually other issues behind a quick temper. If you do not have “anger issues,” write a prayer for those who do. What do you want to remember from last week? What are you looking forward to next week? What are your concerns?