



THE DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE

Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics



SIXTH ORDINARY SUNDAY 2023

Bishop William Murphy, Homily

Ours is a world of choices. Every day, we can be barraged by persons offering us a numberless variety of “goods”, most of which do not deserve to be called ‘good’. But choice is a gift of God. He made us with the freedom to choose. And as Sirach says, *if you choose, you can keep the commandments and they will save you. If you trust in God, you shall live.* He goes on to sound out some basic choices: life and death; good or evil. *Whatever you choose, you can have. But the eyes of God are upon us and to none of us does he give the license to sin.*



That is pretty strong, but it is true and we need to recognize that the eyes of God **are** on us. What precisely does this mean? Two weeks ago, we heard the Beatitudes as Jesus offered what we call the Sermon on the Mount. He taught us the kinds of commitments that make us **blessed**. Last week, he went further and challenged us, saying to us *You are the salt of the earth; you are the light of the world! Your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.* A tall order but a wonderful promise!

Next Sunday you will hear his closing invitation. You and I will be asked by the Lord to go the extra mile as his disciples. Today, as we have just heard, he wants us to make our own the richness of God’s law beginning with the 10 commandments. *Do not think I have come to abolish the law...I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.* There is an unbreakable harmony from the first Covenant given to Moses and the second covenant that Jesus establishes in himself.

He uses antitheses which really go more deeply into what God offers and what God hopes he will find in us all. *You have heard you shall not kill ...but I tell you, whoever is angry... you have a gripe with your brother...go first to be reconciled to your brother. You have heard it said, you shall not commit adultery but I say to you, whoever looks improperly at a woman...Whoever divorces his wife but I say by making an oath ...Again you have heard Do not*

take a false oath...Better for you not to swear at all. Let your 'yes' be 'yes' and your 'no' be 'no'.

What Jesus is telling us is that the law must also be integrated into our personal lives and our culture. The human element of understanding and observing the law must be tempered by the deeper truth of our human relationships. They in turn are transformed by abiding in the love, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Our baptism and confirmation make us members of His body, the Church. That identity that we share makes us proponents of a vision of life and a commitment of living it that is both a challenge and an inspiration. Here in the Eucharist we find the nourishment that gives us the strength and the courage to belong more deeply to Christ, to his Church and to one another. It also opens us to what Paul calls: *a wisdom to those who are mature, not a wisdom of this age...*

That leads me to suggest for your reflection and your prayer. I hope that you will be strong in recognizing and rejecting *the rulers of this age* and be yourselves among those *who speak God's wisdom*.

In our world here, as well as in Europe, there has been a radical shift which more and more denies or at least ignores the primacy of God in favor of individual freedoms and political secularism. While we rightly are concerned about climate change and our environment, we are less protective of human life and human dignity. That can include the promotion of abortion on demand as well as the move toward assisted suicide for the elderly. This is what Pope Francis calls the cancel culture that redefines human community to fit an increasingly secular world that incorrectly calls change, progress.

It is present within our Church. One example is seen in Germany today. It is true that the Vatican Council called us all to read the "signs of the times" and we do that in many ways. But the signs of the times are not a substitute for the teaching of Jesus Christ. Neither are the signs of the times a judge of the value and truth of God's revelation and the constant teaching of the Church. In Germany, as one example, thousands of Catholics have left the Church for many different reasons. A movement there has been used to say that the Church must change her teaching to conform to what the secular world considers most important. No matter how sincere they may be, **today's society** cannot be the measure of God's truth and certainly not a justification to challenge or dismiss what we believe and proclaim every Sunday at Mass. The revelation of Jesus Christ and the Church's teaching must address with kindness and charity

those signs of the times and offer to the faithful and to the world the wisdom of God. As Cardinal St John Newman wrote, *We did not make the Church. We may not unmake it.*

This is where St. Paul is right on target. *We speak God's wisdom, mysterious, hidden, which God predetermined before the ages for our glory, and which none of the rulers of this age knew; for, if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.*

Our freedom to choose is his gift for us to choose the true, the good, and the loving. This is what he gave us. This is what we share. This is who we are and this, **we witness to the world!** Listen again to St. Paul:

Eye has not seen, and ear has not heard what God has prepared for those who love him.

*This, God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit scrutinizes everything,
even the depths of God.*

For as we all prayed today in the Psalm:

BLESSED ARE WE WHO FOLLOW THE LAW OF THE LORD.