

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time A - Being Christian is Being Different

Feb 15, 2026

In today's Gospel, we are reading from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel. It provides a backdrop to all the teaching and works of Jesus. The Sermon on the Mount revealed to us some of the most beautiful Christian realities. Jesus ensures his disciples that he came not to abolish the law, as the scribes and pharisees were accusing him, but to fulfill it. However, his words are quite a challenge. They are weighty and definitive. Jesus says that the Jewish laws of old are not to be lived on the surface, but for transformation of the heart. Jesus touches upon themes of anger, greed, and lust. Jesus is telling us what we do in the religious realm is meant to transform the heart and to be a reflection of our soul where the spirit dwells. So our words and action must be the same. Our "Yes" is "Yes" and our "No" is "No". Anything in between is from the evil one. In other words, we only do what God tells us to do in our heart. We cannot become religious hypocrites. What we say we believe must be matched by a worthy way of life. I remember when I was ordained as a deacon, my bishop handed me the Book of the Gospel and said, "Believe what you read, preach what you believe, practice what you preach." All too often, we Christians must admit, we behave no differently than the pagans of the world. The only difference is that we go to Church on most Sundays! We have to ask ourselves, "Is there something that distinguishes me from my non-religious neighbour?" We often find Christians who behave and talk as the pagans do and this is very sad! Jesus wants us to go deep! A Christian is, by their baptism and by the grace of God, a powerful force for good in the world. A Christian loves differently, lives differently. To be a Christian is no easy thing. Yes, Jesus calls us to the narrow path. It will involve the cross and sacrificial love. But it leads to heaven. Indeed, "blessed are those who walk in the law of the Lord!" (Ps 119) This is why the Church has paired the Gospel with Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Paul says that we need not worry. Every cross we carry will be worth it. Because heaven is for real: "What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him." (1 Cor 2:6-10)

The Bible is, to borrow a contemporary expression, a very "hyperlinked" text. The books of the Old Testament are full of passages that are explained and brought to fulfillment in the books of the New Testament. The New Testament is hidden in the Old, and the Old is revealed in the New. The central and primary foreshadowing in the Old Testament focuses on the Messiah. Thus, the Bible is a revelation about the Christ. So Jesus is the New Moses who gives the new Law (Torah) that brings the Old Law to fulfillment and who leads the New Exodus from Jerusalem to the Kingdom of God. Jesus, the New Moses, leads Peter, James, and John up a high mountain (Mark 9:2) like Moses led Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu up the mountain (Exodus 24:9). Just as Moses fasted for forty days and forty nights on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:28), so Jesus fasted for forty days and forty nights in the desert (Luke 4:1-2). Moses fed the Israelites in the desert with miraculous bread from heaven (Exodus 16:1-31). Jesus feeds the multitudes in the wilderness with five loaves and two fish (Luke 9:10-17) and he continues to feed us in the Eucharist. Moses established the covenant with the twelve tribes of Israel (Exodus 24:1-8). Jesus establishes a new covenant with the twelve apostles at the Last Supper (Luke 22:20)." And so today, as Jesus delivers his new law of love from a mountain in Galilee, we see both a revelation of Jesus as the Son of God, and we also see echoes of the Old Testament.

In general, there are three stages of growth for a Christian, the general elements are the same:

1. Conversion and Purification - this is the initial stage of coming to Christ. It involves the repentance of sin, the removal of vices, the acquisition of virtues, and a life of prayer.
2. Growth - this is the middle stage. Now that there is more virtue than vice, and more desire to live in holiness than to live in sinfulness, the Christian begins to experience a real relationship with Christ, they learn more about the faith, and they also get to know themselves better. In this stage, the light of Christ filters into all areas of life.
3. Union - the final stage of Christian growth, when one is duly prepared by grace, one is in full union with God at the deepest level. These three stages are a continuum. We must pass through the first to get to the next. Most of us would probably be just in the first stage. In today's reading, Jesus challenges us to take the first stage seriously. We must uproot from our lives anger, lust, falsehood,

and swearing. As a Christian, there is much to uproot. But this is only the first stage. Jesus will also open doors for us that lead deeper into union with God. And so, while it may sound hard to hear at first, this is the preparatory work for union with God!

Jesus invites us to walk with him on the narrow way. Jesus wants us to go deeper into the meaning of the commandments, stating that they are to be written into our hearts and into the innermost part of our being. If today's Gospel can be summed up, Jesus is saying: "Life on earth is passing by, and eternity is forever. Strive for Eternity." In this fleeting world, suffering and challenges are inevitable. Right now, each and every one of us can name one or more burdens we have in life such as financial, medical, or personal problems. We cannot escape the burdens of life. But we can do something about them! We are called, as faithful Catholics, to shoulder our crosses with grace and courage. Christ has shown us the way. When we bear our crosses and lovingly pick up the weight of those burdens, they turn into opportunities for growth, sanctification, and deeper communion with God. Pick just one of our problems. The one that makes us suffer the most. Place that burden on the altar at mass and allow Jesus to transform the meaning of that burden into part of his cross. Jesus carried that for us and will help us carry that for him. Jesus asks us to elevate our way of loving. He loved us by sacrificing his entire life for us. He loved us without measure. We are to learn from his way of loving and make that same pattern our way of sacrificially loving our spouses, children, families, friends, and neighbours. The false version of love that we see depicted by Hollywood or in the social media is usually cheap, fake, limited, and selfish. Christian love is so much better than any other human love. This is because Christianity holds the key to real love. Forming a circle of love, in order to stand together and face the world, requires a lot of effort and cannot be achieved through a half-hearted commitment. Real love has obligations and consequences which, when respected, will become deeper and better than anything else on the planet! But to love God means to take on self-discipline by shouldering our crosses. This is an inseparable part of all life that is worth living. Our approach should be based on what pleases God rather than on what we are bound to do. As Sirach said in the first reading, God knows every human action. God gives us the commandments and God respects our freedom to choose. We must trust in God and pray for His guidance to make wise choices in living our Christian life because in the end, we are not going to be judged on the evil we have avoided but, by the grace of God, on the good works we have carried out.