

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A) Homily
Deacon Bob Mintus
Saint William, Champion | February 16, 2020
Sir 15:15-20 | 1 Cor 2:6-10 | Mt 5:17-37 or 5:20-22a, 27-28, 33-34a, 37

How many times have you heard the old saying, “A penny for your thoughts?” This week, Jesus continues the Sermon on the Mount, and his words suggest that our thoughts may be worth more than we imagine.

Jesus listeners were used to being instructed that one’s actions were what was important. After all, the Mosaic law was all about one’s actions, what was to be done or not to be done. But Jesus reminds us that we are called to something more. As we hear the words of our readings and Gospel today, we are challenged to look deeper into our hearts, deeper into our attitudes, and deeper into our very thoughts. It is not only what we do, but also why we do what we do that matters. That’s the difference between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law.

Jesus calls us to live a life of personal integrity. There is more to the commandment “Thou shalt not kill”... We are told that it is wrong to be angry with our brother or sister. Do you remember the expression, “if

looks could kill?” It’s difficult to love our neighbor on one hand and hold grudges against them or wish them ill. It’s difficult to love our neighbor and gossip about them or speak against them. It’s difficult to love our neighbor and consider them to be below us because of what makes them different from us.

Our relationships with our brothers and sisters affect our relationship with God. I know that there have been times in which I had a disagreement before I came to mass. My experience of the Eucharist was diminished, because of the limits that I brought with me to the table.

Yet we live in a world today that seems to be in opposition to Jesus’s message... hypocrisy is commonly tolerated. What do we hear from society? Everybody does it... It’s OK if you don’t get caught... Nobody will know...

A number of years ago, one of my co-workers had a sheet that said the following:

Be careful of your thoughts, for they determine your words;

Be careful of your words, for they determine your actions;

Be careful of your actions, for they determine your habits;

Be careful of your habits, for they determine your character;

Be careful of your character, for it determines your future.

No matter who we are and where we are in our lives, each one of us is in control of the direction our lives will take. Our lives, after all, are a journey. So how do we work on loving our brothers and sisters? Perhaps the right place to start is in our hearts and minds, and taking a look at our thoughts and attitudes. In which direction are they leading us? Where are the areas that we could improve? Only then can we understand as Christians that there is more to the commandments than meets the eye, and respond accordingly, in the way Jesus calls us to.